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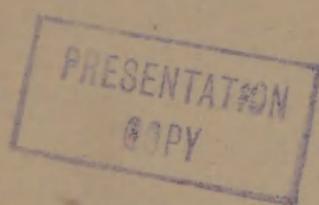
History

THE FAITH OF AN AVERAGE MAN

BY

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AUTHOR OF "A PARSON IN THE AUSTRALIAN BUSH"



LONDON
EDWARD ARNOLD

1911

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TO
F. R. M.

PREFATORY NOTE

THE author of this little book is a clergyman of the Church of England, who, in spite of all the difficulties which beset faith in these restless, questioning days—"when," as has been truly said, "everything shakeable is being shaken, when all authorities and all traditions are being thrown into the melting-pot"—still finds in the faith of that Church the satisfaction of the needs of his own soul. He makes no claim to originality; rather, he thankfully acknowledges that the truth, or such fragments of it as he has been able to see, has been wholly mediated to him through the written or spoken words of wiser and better men. This, indeed, is precisely one of the facts of experience which help to confirm his belief in the Incarnation of the Son of God. But he has written his book almost entirely without reference at the time of writing it to the books to which he owes so much. Whenever such reference has been made, it has been acknowledged in the body of the book. It may well be, however, that the truths which he has tried to express may in places have reappeared in the pages of his book,

clothed, without acknowledgment, in the very words in which they impressed themselves upon his mind in the course of his own reading. Should any such instances of unconscious plagiarism be detected by the reader, he hopes that this explanation may be charitably allowed as a sufficient excuse.

In conclusion, the author ventures to hope that the nature of his book may excuse the frequent recurrence of the personal pronoun. He has thought it better to run the risk of too obtrusive an egoism, rather than the opposite risk of seeming to speak with greater authority than he has any right to claim. The book as it stands claims to express no more than his personal interpretation of the faith of the Church.

C. H. S. M.

October, 1911.

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THE
FAITH OF AN AVERAGE MAN

BOOK I

LIFE AND THE CHRISTIAN CREED

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTORY

THERE comes a time in the life of the average young man when he awakes for the first time to the difficulty of faith. At home and at school religion has been more or less taken for granted, even though it has not been taken very seriously. An occasional sermon in the school-chapel has awakened or fostered high resolves ; Confirmation has, perhaps, done something to strengthen them ; and, after Confirmation, Holy Communion has been received more or less regularly, partly, perhaps, from a real desire to seek in that Sacrament strength to fight the great battle of boyhood—the subjugation of the passions and the escape from the grosser forms of sin. The round of chapel

services has, at all events, made portions of the Prayer-Book familiar, and the Scripture lessons have made equally familiar certain portions of the Old and New Testament. The books of the latter have been studied in the Greek text, with the aid of some authorized and orthodox commentary, which has discussed more or less fully variations in the text, and the authorship and probable date of the particular books read.

So equipped, the boy passes from school to college, becomes suddenly a "man," and is brought at once into an atmosphere of intellectual doubt which causes him to begin to question for the first time the reality of his own religion and the strength of its foundations. This is especially the case if he is one of the constantly increasing number who are abandoning the traditional classical education in order to become students of natural science.

Then one of these things probably happens. Either the man, with the help of older friends, finds answers to his difficulties in so far as they are answerable, and balancing the difficulties of faith against the difficulties of unbelief, makes his decision for God, and commits himself more or less completely to the life of faith and the discipline of the Church; or he may, on the other hand, definitely abandon at this stage a religion which he feels has never been real, and commit himself to an agnostic position, simply leaving religion out of his life. Or—and this is probably the commonest

course—he falls into a position midway between the two. In this case, he just drifts along in an atmosphere of vague doubt, a “half-believer of a casual creed,” governed in his religious exercises chiefly by the circumstances of the moment. He gives up his private prayers; he goes to church when he happens to be in the company of church-going people, at other times he usually stays away; he leaves off going to Communion, except perhaps at Easter and Christmas. Such religion as he retains has little reality or power, and is a mere appendix to his life. And yet, I think, sooner or later, usually before many years have passed, most men become dissatisfied with a position which is neither one thing nor the other. They begin to feel the need of religion. They are ready, at least, to inquire what faith means to others. It is at this moment that a man becomes willing to pay attention to the testimony of others—to listen to or to read the account believers have to give of their own faith. He does not want, I think, a book of formal apologetic so much as an honest attempt by a fellow-man who has been through somewhat the same experience as himself, to indicate some of the steps by which he arrived at faith, and what the faith is to which he has come. He has begun to believe that the Church stands for more than he had realized, and wants to know more about its doctrine. This is the man I have in view in the first instance in writing this book.

I cannot help desiring that all men should attain

to a vital faith, and I am sure that there is no happiness in life to compare with the happiness of helping others to such a faith.

And this brings me to a second point. I desire, if it may be, to help the doubtful to faith and the peace that comes from faith, and at the same time I feel that the only faith worth having is a faith that is truly progressive.

I believe that their very soul-hunger is leading men in many instances to accept a faith not wholly false, but, rather, less than the highest and best of which they are capable—a faith which is not really fitted to hold its own in the open, which depends for its continuance upon barred doors and narrow windows. The disaster involved in accepting such a faith is this—that while it may be strong enough to survive the attacks of the moment, it is almost bound to succumb before the heavier artillery which will be brought to bear upon it in the future. And it is certain that those who preach such a faith as this, whatever be their present success, are, in fact, failing to attract and save some who might be attracted and saved by a larger, stronger, purer faith.

So I have in view, not only those who have no faith, but those who, having faith in some sort, are yet, by a strange but not uncommon contradiction, haunted by the fear that their faith is in danger—a fear which shows in itself that their faith is not the truest and best of which man is capable. In a word, this little

book is written by one who is no scholar and cannot write for scholars, for the large number of men of average ability and attainment who are hovering on the border-line of faith, on one side or the other; who want to believe, but find faith difficult; who feel that the big books are beyond them, and the little books both offer and ask too much. For that, indeed, is the fault of almost all the little books of formal apologetic. For the most part they attempt too much. The very completeness and finality of their statements is apt to put off the man who feels that life is still an unfinished affair. The circle of their ideas has somehow too short a radius. It is complete only because it leaves so much outside.

I feel that the critic may well say, when he has read my book, that a sharply-defined circle is likely to be of more use to the doubter than a kind of patch-work, ending on all sides in ragged edges. Yet I would humbly plead that life as the average man knows it is more like an unfinished patchwork than "the finished round." The true faith is ever that which is content here on earth "to see in a mirror darkly," though our orthodox apologists sometimes seem unduly impatient of the mirror's limitations.

So my book does not aim at being more than a collection of "broken arcs," which are yet, I do believe, parts of that all-embracing circle, much of which remains still beyond our ken.

It follows from what I have said that the only

appeal that I can hope to make is a strictly limited one. I can make no attempt to write for the learned; and, indeed, I think the learned are already sufficiently catered for by the books of their fellows; but it may be that there is room for an honest consideration of some of the aspects and implications of faith, by a man of average academic attainment, a humble "picker up of learning's crumbs," who, indeed, is conscious that he may well seem to the more learned a mere *σπερμολόγος*.

If the writer has any particular qualification for thus making an appeal on behalf of faith to younger men, it is that he has had the good fortune to be thrown, perhaps rather more than most clergy, into contact with men of all sorts here in England and in the Bush of Australia, and that he has found them often so interested in religion and so anxious and willing to be helped.

So much by way of explanation of the purpose of this book. There remains to add here, by way of anticipation of what follows, a plain and unvarnished statement which shall, at least, make it clear what the convictions are that lie behind the whole appeal. First I believe, and would have others believe, in a living God, who is working out "one increasing purpose" through the ages. Next I believe that in Jesus Christ God is incarnate. Believing this, I believe that God is love, that He loves all men, that He would have all men to be saved from sin and come to the knowledge

of the truth. I believe, further, that Jesus Christ is an historical person who was slain at a moment in history on Mount Calvary, by men who are in a real and true sense representative of all men—not particularly blind or particularly wicked, but simply men who, like most of us, when faced by two alternatives, have chosen the easier and lower rather than the harder and higher. I believe, therefore, that Christ was slain by sin. I believe, further, that by His death He made atonement, not, indeed, by working any change in God, but by opening men's eyes and touching their hearts, and so making it possible for them, through sharing His sufferings, to enter into His triumphs. For I believe that He did triumph over suffering and over death, "rose again from the dead," and made Himself known to His disciples as undefeated by death, even the death of the Cross.

I believe that those disciples formed the nucleus of a Church—a society of those who, believing in Christ, found themselves, in one sense, already saved; in another sense, in the way of salvation. I believe that all men of good-will—all men who have tried to follow the best that they have seen and have not sinned against the light—belong to the soul of that Church. I believe, further, that those who have been baptized with water, in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; who have been Confirmed by the laying on of Apostolic hands; who have been instructed in the faith and passed through a genuine experience of

penitence and pardon ; who have become faithful partakers of the other great Sacrament, "ordained by Christ Himself," have been admitted to the highest privileges and called to the highest responsibilities possible to men on earth. I believe that such men are meant to be, and indeed are, so long as, with whatever failures, they strive to live up to their ideal, the light of the world and the salt of the earth. I believe that the life they are called to live is a life of faith, hope, love, discipline, service, sacrifice, using all their faculties to the utmost in the service of God and man. I believe that those, and only those, who strive to live such a life, experience here and now that eternal life over which physical death has no power.

That, in brief outline, is my positive religious faith. It is not by any means free from difficulties, any more than life is free from difficulties. There are points upon which I am not prepared to make any assertion, where others think it very needful to be dogmatic. What these points, or some of them, are will appear in the course of the book.

In my view, the world of faith is at present in something like the present condition of the terrestrial sphere. Parts of it are well known and clearly mapped, but it grows easier than of old to pass, so to speak, beyond civilized areas into the regions where the blazed trail and lonely outpost are all that the traveller can rely upon, and I do not doubt that beyond these regions, again, are others as yet wholly

unexplored. It follows that I consider those who expect to obtain, or profess to supply a complete survey of the whole field, as, on the one hand, asking, and on the other, offering more than circumstances warrant. For myself, I am content if I can find in Bible and Prayer-Book, in Creed and Sacrament, a record of real achievement, a sufficiently accurate guide, a more or less complete equipment, and a base of supply for the necessaries of life to men who are called to test the old maps and to set forth upon the new adventures. It is with me a fundamental article of belief that no man is likely to win any sure progress who is content simply to throw on one side the achievements of the past. In the chapters that follow I attempt to set forth, very briefly and superficially, the way in which the main beliefs and practices of the past have proved their real value for me in the present, in so far as I have put them to the proof of practical life.

CHAPTER II

THE ADVENTURE OF FAITH

“ It is faith—

The feeling that there’s God ; He reigns and rules
Out of this low world.”—*The Ring and the Book*.

“ THOU (O God) hast created us for Thyself, and our heart is restless until it rests in Thee.” That is where I start. My religion begins in a felt want, a realization of emptiness, of a desire which grows deeper and stronger the more I know of life for something—rather, for someone—outside the never-ceasing changes and chances of the universe. My heart and mind rebel against the intolerable emptiness of a godless and doomed world. Life seems to me, whether my own life or the life of the world, to demand a background—perhaps it would be truer to say to demand a centre. From whatever point I start my thinking, I always come back to this. If I start with my own life, my own work, and try to find for it a meaning and a value, I find none unless it takes its place as part of a larger purpose. My own life needs a background. If I start with thoughts about the

objective world and such explanations as science offers me, again I see that without a background of purpose nothing has any meaning or value at all. "Vanity of vanities—all is vanity"; that, it seems to me, must be the cry of every thinking man who has not found the rest which St. Augustine found in God. And the more I look out upon the world of to-day, with its endless restlessness, its feverish rushing hither and thither, its worship of hustle and bustle; the more insight I gain into the unreality of its politics, the futility of its new religious and social nostrums, the more evidence I see of a world which is going all wrong because it has lost the clue. The world, it seems to me, is restless because it has not found its true, its only rest, in God. Life without a spiritual background remains a vain and empty thing. To what purpose this ceaseless activity? I ask; and when I ask that, I am asking, as it seems to me, for a religion, for God.

I see in this endless restlessness unmistakable evidence of the world's need of God, because it shows me plainly that others, like myself, have needs which this world alone cannot satisfy. There are, indeed, certain people who appear to be, for the moment, at any rate, content with life as they know it. There are those who live wholly on life's surface, who have in practice abrogated man's highest faculties, and simply refuse to think; men and women who have so far never been brought into contact with life's darker

side, who have known no great sorrow, borne no great suffering, and for whom the world is still full of novel pleasures and excitements. Such people are, in fact, content, in so far as they are content without religion, because so far they have not come face to face with life's realities. Others, again, specialists in some work of absorbing interest, seem to have the power of concentrating all their energies upon their work and such recreations as give them most pleasure. They are content, because they have deliberately narrowed the range of their vision. The interest of their work is enough to occupy their minds. They put all their energies into that, and are ready, as far as the possibilities of any other life are concerned, to take their chance with countless others who share their outlook upon life.

Now, I confess that in neither of these directions can I find any peace myself. A contentment which is so obviously at the mercy of some sudden common disaster, which abides with its possessor only so long as in one way or the other he is shut off from reality, is in the last resort not worth anything. It seems to me that there is only one true content possible to man —the content which comes from personal faith in a personal God. The man who sees God at the centre and God at the circumference of life, not merely of all life, but of his own particular life, is the man whom nothing can overwhelm. "All things" do literally "work together for good to them that love God."

For them all life is an adventure which must ultimately succeed ; for them failure and disappointments, no less than success and prosperity, are worth while. The world cannot defeat them, for the world is in the hands of God, though it knows Him not.

“ This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” The world defeated Jesus, if it ever defeated any man. On Calvary its triumph was manifest ; yet within an incredibly short space of time it was seen that the world’s central triumph was its crowning defeat. The man of faith walks secure through life and through death. So faith alone gives true content.

And the first movement towards living faith is the sense of the emptiness and futility of life without it. Not that this sense always of necessity leads men to God. If that were so, all men would necessarily find Him. Plainly the same sense of unsatisfied desire may lead a man to every kind of folly and excess, and even, at last, to suicide. The mere feeling that I have not achieved content simply sets me upon the search after a wider experience, in the hope that such experience may bring content. It is only when I see in others the content I myself long for ; when I see them leading a wide and free life, a life wider and freer than the life of the rest of men, and facing with courage, and even joy, the worst the world can do ; and when I find that the secret of this triumph over the power of changing circumstances is simply their

unconquerable faith, that I am led to accept the religious solution as a working hypothesis for life. We begin to see, then, why true faith in God always goes hand in hand with faith in man. Somehow or other, the two are inseparable. It is a fundamental truth of living experience, no less than a central self-evident truth of the Gospel. Every one of us needs a human mediator, or he can never come to know God. "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen cannot love God Whom he hath not seen."¹ This, I say, is a fact of experience. Ask any man of faith how he came to believe, and he will tell you at once of some man to whose living companionship or written word he owes, as he says, everything, under God.

The man who seeks faith must be prepared to put himself to school with men of faith. "On God and godlike men we build our trust."

And at the same time he must beware of asking too much. The man who seeks a faith which is to remove all the difficulties of life is seeking an impossibility. There will always remain intellectual puzzles to which no clear and complete answer can be given. Old arguments against religion are met and answered, but in a short time new ones come to light, to be met and answered in their turn; and the best to which a man can attain in this direction is the assurance which grows deeper and deeper with

¹ 1 John iv. 20 (R.V.).

the growth of experience, that the faith which has been able to survive triumphant the attacks of the past, and has proved its validity by the experience it has brought, contains within itself the seed of its own immortality. It may be crucified, but it will be crucified to rise again to greater glory.

It is necessary to remember this, because a man may find as life goes on that in this or that respect the answers to difficulties which once appeared valid appear so no longer.

But the man who has once committed himself to the life of faith will come to find that the test of a true faith is not merely its power of survival, but its power of growth. By faith he enters upon a life which moves ever on "from strength to strength."

And the real service that the men of faith can do is this—that they can put those who will trust them in the way of gaining that which is the best—nay, the only answer—to all doubt, a living experience which will enable them to repeat with conviction the words of the poet :

" Whoso hath felt the Spirit of the Highest
 Cannot confound nor doubt Him, nor deny ;
Yea, with one voice, O world, tho' thou deniest,
 Stand thou on that side, for on this am I."¹

But the inquirer may well say, Where am I to begin my adventure of faith ? I hear a babel of rival voices on all sides of me, each bidding me turn a deaf ear to the others and listen only to itself.

¹ Myers, " St. Paul."

How am I to make my choice among them?—Papist, Anglican and Protestant, Modernist, Traditionalist, High Churchman, Broad Churchman, and Low Churchman. How am I to choose my men of faith among this bewildering throng?

To that question the answer seems to me to be perfectly simple. Start where you are, and start with an open mind. It is the essence of a personal faith in a living God that a man should be able to say, “I am where I am at this moment by God’s overruling Providence.” “If I climb up into heaven, Thou art there; if I go down into hell, Thou art there also; if I take the wings of the morning and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall Thy hand lead me and Thy right hand shall hold me.” That is the fundamental conviction of the believer. When a man has come to believe, he will look back over his life, and see that God was leading him even while he knew it not. He will see God’s leading in the first movement towards faith. He will believe that it was by God’s doing that he was led to form such and such a friendship, and that this or that book came into his possession. It does not, of course, follow that the inquirer is to remain in his present environment. It may be that the immediate result of the awakening of faith will be that he is compelled to move on elsewhere. But, at least, he is right in starting where he is—indeed, it is impossible for him to do otherwise.

Thus a man may find himself, as the present writer found himself when he was first impelled to set out upon the voyage of personal religious adventure, a baptized member of the historic Church of England. His first business, then, is to find out what the Church tells him to believe and do. If he does this with an open mind he will discover what it is that the Church really stands for—what is the secret of her life and the source of her power. He will soon find, if he is sufficiently in earnest to make the practical experiment of trying to live according to the ideal the Church offers her sons, that abstract difficulties of thought, for the most part, solve themselves in life. “If any man is ready to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.”

Faith has been well defined as “an experiment which results in an experience.”

The pragmatic test may not be a final proof of absolute truth; but they, at least, who put the faith to a practical proof, and find that it works—that it makes life seem well worth living, and robs death of its terrors—are better off than those who simply leave religion and all the ultimate realities of life on one side. And, indeed, the practical test is not only the sole possible test for the average man who is not a trained philosopher, but it is really a satisfactory test, because, as has been well and truly said, “What is practically unsatisfactory, cannot, in the long run, satisfy us theoretically.”

CHAPTER III

THE CREED OF THE CHURCH

It follows from what has been said that the attempt to start as it were *in vacuo*, and to discover for oneself an ideally perfect religion, is to attempt the impossible. Mr. G. K. Chesterton has indeed told us, in his brilliant book "Orthodoxy," that when he first discovered the inadequacy of his youthful agnosticism he started out, in the exuberance of youth, to build up a religion for himself, and, whenever he had arrived at some satisfactory achievement in this adventure, found, with something of a shock, that he had merely re-discovered some fundamental article in the Christian Creed. But for most of us such an adventure as this will seem somewhat too ambitious. The average man is more likely to win through by starting from the opposite direction. For him the better plan is surely to accept the historic Christian Creed as part of the environment in which he finds himself, seek to discover what it really means, and put it to the test of actual life.

If he be already a baptized member of the Church

of England, he will find himself committed not merely to a certain form of belief, but also to a certain manner of life and worship. The very service used at his Baptism links these things together as a kind of trinity of duties, making up the one life of the Churchman in its religious aspect. He is to believe the Creed, walk according to the rule of the ancient Commandments as interpreted by Christ, and to pray after the fashion of the Lord's Prayer ; and it is made plain that this general duty of prayer or worship includes public worship and the other Sacraments which follow Baptism in due course.

Now the first obvious thoughts which suggest themselves to the inquirer are these—first, that the acceptance of the Christian Creed is put before the leading of a right life ; and, secondly, that the two are indissolubly linked together. The Church plainly teaches that the foundation of a right life is a true Creed, and that the true Creed is useless when it does not issue in right action. The old saying, “ Believe, and do what you like,” sounds at first hearing supremely dangerous ; but the fact is that real belief in the Christian Creed carries with it life according to the Christian standard, and he who will not strive after the latter cannot possibly have attained to the former. We begin, then, with an attempt to see what the Christian Creed stands for, and that not as embodying a series of abstract propositions, but as bearing upon and leading to a practical daily life.

Now in the Christian Creed the attention is focussed upon certain beliefs which all centre round the Person, life, death, and teaching of Jesus Christ. The first article of the Creed, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth," may indeed be said to be the summary of all His life and all His teaching. The central portion of the Creed sums up the Church's belief concerning the Person and history of Jesus Himself. The final portion links that Person on to the subsequent life of the world, and is, in truth, a safeguard, never more needed than at the present time, against the attempt to estimate aright the life and work of the historical Jesus apart from its subsequent effect upon the world.

Now there is no need to enlarge upon the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God. It is this at which we arrive by way of faith in Jesus Christ. To know Him and Jesus Christ Whom He has sent—to come to know Him through faith in Jesus Christ Whom He has sent—is to have attained to the highest religion possible to man.

And, indeed, you cannot come to that faith in God as the Father apart from Jesus Christ, though it is no doubt true that some may come to it apart from *conscious* faith in Him. But it is certain that, when once you believe in Jesus Christ, you cannot stop short of belief in the Fatherhood of God. Therefore a right belief in Jesus Christ has always been held by the common consent of Christian people to be essential to a right belief in the Deity.

And you cannot study the Christian Creed without seeing at once that the two doctrines, singled out by the Christian consciousness as of supreme importance, are the doctrine of the Incarnation and the doctrine of the Atonement. A right belief in these is held to be necessary to salvation. It will be needful for us, in a subsequent chapter, to discuss what is meant and implied by salvation.¹ All that need be said here is that the man who is inquiring after religion is obviously in some sense a seeker after salvation. Therefore it will be well for him to begin with an attempt to discover the reason of the emphasis laid by the Church on these doctrines. And at once it is obvious that the doctrine of the Incarnation—of God manifest in man—exactly meets that fundamental need, with which we started, for a Creed which recognizes God in the very centre of human life and human activity. The doctrine of the Incarnation, as we shall see later on, is precisely fitted to give to all life that meaning and value without which it is altogether vain. And the doctrine of the Atonement is equally fitted to illuminate all the dark places of life. Not that the Incarnation and the Atonement are really separable except as “doctrines”—for the purpose, that is, of thought and teaching. Life itself is one. We may divide it into happy moments and unhappy moments, times of joy and times of sorrow; yet all these, as we know the moment we stop to

¹ See below, p. 77.

think, run into one another, inextricably intermingled ; and while it is broadly true that the doctrine of the Incarnation has to do with life, and the doctrine of the Atonement deals with sin, suffering, sorrow, and death, yet the one doctrine depends upon and is inextricably bound up with the other, because the Christ who was and is God, and gave and gives Himself for and to us, is one Christ. It is really necessary to remember this, because half the difficulties which many people feel in regard to the doctrine of the Atonement vanish when it is remembered that the doctrine that Christ died for our sins that we might be reconciled to God is not a statement complete in itself. It depends for its value upon the truths that God was really in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, and that Christ was truly man, and as man wholly one with us.

We must remember, further, that the third part of the Creed is, as has been already hinted, no mere appendix to the earlier portions. Without belief in the Holy Spirit, belief in the Incarnation and the Atonement would soon become impossible. The profound difficulty which so many people feel to-day in ascribing such tremendous importance as Christians do to certain events which occupy but a brief moment in the history of the world, and lie so far off in the obscure past that it sometimes seems wellnigh impossible to discover with any exactitude, from the fragmentary records which remain, exactly what did

take place—this difficulty vanishes for those who believe that the work of Christ neither began nor ended with the Gospels. The article which tells us that He was “conceived by the Holy Ghost,” and all the concluding portion of the Creed, which does no more than amplify the statement, “I believe in the Holy Ghost,” is, in reality, the Church’s safeguard against any statement which would limit the work of the God manifest in Christ to any moment in time.

There is a constant tendency in those who desire to emphasize the presence of God in a particular way, at a particular time, in a particular place, to do so in such a way as to suggest that God is not present in other ways, at other times, in other places. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit does, indeed, safeguard that profound truth, which is so simple that we teach it to our babes, even while we often seem to deny it when we are teaching others, that God is everywhere.

It is, indeed, profoundly true that in Jesus we see the God who is everywhere, made manifest as He is manifested nowhere else. The Godhead shines forth in Him as in none other. It is by seeing God in Him that we learn to recognize His presence everywhere; but the very Scripture which testifies of Him, testifies of Him all through, not only in the Gospel pages; and that Scripture itself bears witness that He is “the light that lighteth every man coming into the world,”¹

¹ St. John i. 9.

and "the Lamb," slain indeed on Calvary, but "slain from the foundation of the world."¹

Thus Scripture and the Creed alike teach us to see God ever in our midst, and ever in our midst as Father, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. The great doctrines of the Creed have, as it were, a centre in history, from which we learn to recognize their age-long and all-embracing range.

One more preliminary point must be made. There is no real contradiction between the universality of the saving truths of Christianity and belief in a Church which is a society of men separated from their fellows. Belief in a Church, or society of believers, does indeed follow from the other beliefs we have begun to examine. On the one hand, it is a fact of experience that men are not agreed in their beliefs about God, and, on the other, it is surely plain that those who really believe that God was incarnate in Jesus, and that the same Jesus died for our sins, and triumphed over death, are in a totally different position from the men who do not hold these beliefs. Such beliefs as these, really accepted, carry with them, as has already been pointed out, a most practical conclusion. So practical, indeed, that many men shut their minds against the belief because they shrink from the life which that belief demands. There are always many who are vainly fleeing from the God Whose love is ever pursuing men whose life is really, even while they

¹ Rev. xiii. 8.

know it not, summed up in that wonderful modern poem :

“ I fled Him, down the nights and down the days ;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years ;
I fled Him down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind ; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes I sped ;
And shot, precipitated
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmèd fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.
But with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancey,
They beat—and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet —
‘ All things betray thee, who betrayest Me.’ ”¹

But it is surely plain that they who have found and been found of Him cannot be as those who as yet know Him not. Believers in Him are linked together by a common faith which of necessity separates them, though it be by a gulf which, equally of necessity, they are ever seeking to bridge, from those who have not faith. Belief in the Church is thus seen to be no unnecessary addition to a true belief in God—the one demands the other. It is indeed impossible to draw hard and fast lines between those who are within and those who are without the Church as God sees it. Formal boundaries at best mark only the limits of vocation to special positions and correspond-

¹ Francis Thompson, “ The Hound of Heaven.”

ing responsibilities. It is true that the Communicant of the Church is in a position of greater privilege than the non-Communicant, but this only means that he is called to a life of more strenuous missionary endeavour and more complete self-sacrifice. There is no intolerance in making such an assertion as this. Intolerance only begins when those who have the higher privileges begin to despise those that are without, for whose sake as much as for their own, the privilege has been given them.

In subsequent chapters we shall consider in rather more detail some of the doctrines we have briefly summarized, and the real meaning of life within the Church.

CHAPTER IV

THE RELIGION OF THE INCARNATION

“ The acknowledgment of God in Christ
Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
All questions in the earth and out of it.”

ROBERT BROWNING.

I CANNOT demonstrate by any formal proof the truth that God was incarnate in Jesus, and I have never found anyone who could prove that He was not so incarnate. But having accepted this belief in the first instance simply because men I believed in told me that it was the light of their own lives, as it had been the light of millions before them, and having tried to put it to the test of experience, I have never found any reason for abandoning it. I like to think of the Incarnation as Dr. Illingworth taught us to think of it many years ago, as the climax of God's immanence in the world.¹

I am convinced that the historical Jesus claimed to be the Son of God ; claimed to speak with the Father's authority ; claimed to reveal God in His words and

¹ Illingworth, “ Divine Immanence ” (Macmillan, 1898), p. 77.

His deeds. I am convinced that the records of His words and deeds, when criticism has done its utmost to sift and test them, taken with the subsequent effect upon the world of belief in Him, substantiate those claims. I see in Jesus supremely what I see less clearly elsewhere, the spiritual ruling the natural, and forcing it to subserve spiritual ends. I see in His life the very spirit of all true life. I see in Him all true human life given a meaning and purpose, redeemed from the aimlessness and bankruptcy of the merely transitory and fleeting. We shall speak in a subsequent chapter a little more fully of the Christ of the Gospels, but here we confine our attention to that one aspect of Him which is summarized in the doctrine of the Incarnation. Jesus is God incarnate, and therefore we see in Him God's estimate of human life and its possibilities. For, in the first place, we see in Jesus the consecration of all that is truly human. We have seen great men who are eccentric, men of whom we should say that for all their greatness they were inhuman, or wanting in humanity. But He who is by universal consent acknowledged to be the greatest of men, who, whatever else we may believe about Him, has at least manifestly and indubitably had a greater influence on the world's history than any other individual man, is wholly and supremely human. It may be true that the phrase "the Son of Man" had in contemporary literature a purely apocalyptic sense, as some critics assert. The fact remains

that it has come to express for us the catholic humanity of Jesus. It is this catholic Man who is supremely Divine, and reveals, as we have said, the Divine estimate of human life. So, as we watch Him taking His share of human work, entering freely into human joys, sympathizing profoundly with human sorrows, pointing the way of escape from the common ills of men, we get an idea of God which brings us just what we need to make our own life seem worth while. There is comfort beyond words not only for great philosophers and profound thinkers, for some tiny aristocracy of thought or achievement, but for all men, in the God revealed in Jesus Christ. We learn to see Him as profoundly interested in every detail of our lives, and counting no common human occupation unworthy of His notice. The woman making bread or searching for a lost coin, the shepherd and the farmer, the artisan and the labourer, the merchant and fisherman—each in his turn finds himself the centre of the Master's interest, and His common daily work turned to spiritual uses. Every common interest of the common men and women of His day was given—for those who had ears to hear—a spiritual value and worth. And if it be objected that whole realms of new human interest have come into being since that day—that Jesus had no word to utter on such subjects as Art or Science, I make this threefold answer: First, that the principle of the Incarnation holds good for all time—the principle that human

life is the meeting-place of Nature and God—that all that is truly human is a vehicle of the Divine. Secondly, that a real revelation of the Spiritual and Eternal could only conceivably be made at any one point in time in the terms of the life of that time. If, as I am compelled to believe, all life is a progress, it would be not merely a contradiction but an impossibility, to introduce at one point in the upward struggle the distinctive mark of a far subsequent age. Thirdly, I maintain that every department of human life and thought has, as a matter of indisputable fact, been ennobled and redeemed by the inspiration of the Christian Creed and the Christian atmosphere.

Thus the religion of the Incarnation gives an immeasurable worth to life. So far from religion being, as it is often thought to be—as indeed it often is where the doctrine of the Incarnation holds no vital place—a narrowing thing, a thing which cuts a man off from life, it is found to raise all life to a higher plane and to widen out all horizons. The religion of the Incarnation is a truly catholic religion. St. Paul was stating a fact which his own experience had proved—a fact which experience continues to prove even to-day—when he asserted that it was “the good pleasure of God . . . to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth.”¹ Of course we are asked to accept a mystery beyond the limits of our understanding. The Catholic Faith deals frankly

¹ Eph. i. 10 (R.V.).

first with "the things in the heavens"—if it did not it would be no religion at all, and could never satisfy the deepest needs of our life. It is a plain fact that the average man cannot rest content with the things he can touch and see and handle. Somehow or other he must continually strive to escape from the deadly monotony of a merely material existence. Nothing is more certain than this. The very evils of modern life bear witness to this truth. Thus such widespread evils as drink and gambling are often rivals to religion because of this. They are ways—spiritual ways—in which a man seeks to widen the horizon of life. One sees this vividly in the lonely places of the earth such as the Bush of Australia, where, against the vastness of the material universe the human spirit is dwarfed, and life takes on the appearance of an unequal warfare. In such circumstances drink and gambling offer an escape to the oppressed soul. They are religions, but they are religions of hell, for as a matter of fact the escape they offer is no permanent one—the more a man seeks escape in these particular ways the narrower in the end his life becomes, until every interest is swallowed up in the one master-passion which has brought at the last not life, but death.

And I have mentioned these far-off places particularly, because it is in such places, where all conventional religion has long ago been slain by the facts of life, where one sees human nature stripped of all the shams and conventions of civilization, where

class distinctions are forgotten and one man meets another on equal terms as "brother man," that one learns more readily perhaps than in the midst of a complex civilization, the real value of that Creed which tells us that God deigns to make His great appeal to us as our Brother Man, and so addresses that appeal not in the first instance to our intellect, lest religion should be thought to be a matter of intellect only, but simply to our humanity as such, that religion may be truly catholic, that He may be the Redeemer of all men, "high and low, rich and poor, one with another," and that all the things that divide men and keep them asunder may be done away in their common union with Him.

So to me the doctrine of the Incarnation makes an irresistible appeal. I find that it gives my own life and the life of all my brother-men a meaning and value which they otherwise would not have. I see how in the Son of Man untold millions who know Him not by name or even think that they are rejecting Him, because they have failed to recognize Him in some conventional portrait or some system of doctrine which has been offered to them by those who speak in His name, will yet find themselves saved in Him at the last because, with whatever failures, they have striven to be true to the highest that they have known and true to the best instincts of their human nature, and so have given themselves in some way or another for their fellow-men. "Then shall the righteous answer

Him, saying, Lord when saw we Thee. . . ? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."¹

Again, it seems to me that in the movement of contemporary life and thought I find much to confirm my own belief in the vital importance of the doctrine of the Incarnation. It seems to me that, as a matter of experience, there is religious vitality and vigour in exactly those places where this doctrine is taught and accepted. In other places where the emphasis of the preaching and teaching given is too exclusively laid upon the doctrine of the Cross, there seems to me to be a tendency for religion to become rather an appendix or addition to life than an inspiration for life. I do not wish to be misunderstood. The teaching of the Cross is to me as vital as that of the Incarnation, but it is possible so to dwell upon redemption from sin as to exclude the no less vital doctrine of the redemption of the whole of life. And it seems to me that the modern revolt against the idea of sin has taken place mainly in regions where the traditional teaching has dwelt too exclusively upon the fact of sin and some particular theory of the Atonement.

For the average man sin is a fact of experience. There are times in his life when he realizes with an intense longing the need of atonement, but these times are not always. Perhaps as he grows older and

¹ St. Matt. xxv. 40.

his religious experience grows deeper, while still, in many cases at least, as conscious as ever of the need of that aspect of religion, he becomes more conscious of a wider religious need—the need for the redemption of the whole work of life, for the atonement of his whole life with the Divine, and then a teaching that dwells wholly on sin, and very likely presents the Atonement in some unreal transactional form, necessarily comes to seem to him something unreal, narrow, and exclusive, unfitted to meet the needs of life. Moreover, to those who have always lived lives of blameless respectability, and have never been troubled with any deep sense of sin, the new doctrine, which speaks of the idea of sin as a delusion, and bids men shake themselves free from a dead tradition and be up and doing in the world, naturally appeals with considerable, if transitory, force.

In a subsequent chapter we shall have to go rather more deeply into the question of sin. Here it is sufficient to record the conviction that any so-called Gospel which treats sin as something negligible is no Gospel for the average man, though it may appear a Gospel to the man in comfortable circumstances, who has never been brought face to face with the realities of life.

But the fact remains, thank God, that escape from sin is not the end of religion, but rather, in one sense at least, its beginning. The end of religion is the complete consecration of life. This does not mean, of

course, the justification of every thing that is, just because it is ; it does not mean that we are to regard this world as "the best of all possible worlds," but it does mean that true life is a progress, which has a higher aim than mere escape from evil. It does mean that we can take this life as it is as our starting-point ; that this life is not a thing outside and apart from religion ; that the material is not necessarily evil ; that all legitimate human interests and occupations are capable of being made religious in themselves—ministrant, that is, to the spiritual.

If we start our Christian Creed with the Incarnation, we are saved from certain false and misleading conceptions which, though they have done infinite harm to religion in the past, are still very widespread. We are saved from that disastrous subdivision of life into water-tight compartments which destroys the unity of life and allows the introduction of those all too common contradictions between religious profession and practical conduct which give to the unbeliever such ample excuse for his jibes at religion. We are saved, again, as we have seen, from a conception of religion which makes of it a philosophy for an intellectual aristocracy to the exclusion of the common man. We are saved, no less, from the ancient, but still lingering, Manichæan heresy which would set the material in opposition to the spiritual, and treat matter as something evil in itself.

No other religion seems to me to cover the ground

of life as this religion does. No other religion seems to me to make for progress as this one, which, by its very nature, gives to progress a definite direction and goal. No other religion holds forth so high an ideal, or gives such sure hope of its ultimate accomplishment.

CHAPTER V

THE QUESTION OF SIN

IN the last chapter we had occasion to refer to the modern revolt in certain quarters against the Christian doctrine of sin. That revolt has many causes, but none of them seem to go very deep, and there are already many signs that it has had its day. Of course, if sin is a mere delusion, Christianity—the religion of Jesus—is no Gospel. That is clear to anyone who reads the New Testament. The whole appeal of Jesus is addressed to those who are discontented with the world as it is and themselves as they are—to those who long for redemption, and who have faith to believe that redemption is possible. Jesus had no message for the contented. Yet it is not hard to understand the modern revolt made in the supposed interests of the religion of Jesus, even though it be made against a doctrine which has found universal acceptance, through nineteen centuries. I have already indicated some of its most obvious causes. In this chapter we will confine our attention to the reason most commonly adduced by its leaders—viz.,

that the doctrine of sin is incompatible with the scientific doctrine of evolution. To that contention, most average men would be content to reply that sin is a fact of experience, and that no one has any right to deny a fact in the interest of a theory, however interesting that theory may be. It is the easy, but not very satisfactory, method of the Christian scientists who meet the problem of suffering by denying that suffering exists.

But let us inquire whether the doctrine of sin does conflict in any way with the doctrine of evolution. There is no doubt that it does conflict with the *popular notion* of evolution. But the popular notion of evolution is as far from the scientific doctrine as the popular notion of religion is from the exposition of a professor of theology. The popular notion of evolution is of an age-long steady and consistent rise from time immemorial to the present day—of an uninterrupted progress from lower to higher, as it were up a smooth inclined plane. So we have passed, they say, in orderly procession from some simple nebulous beginning, from step to step and stage to stage, until we have arrived at the complex, highly-developed life of man to-day. Obviously, in so simple a scheme there is no place for free-will, no possibility of a fall.

But does this popular scheme in any way correspond either with any accepted scientific doctrine or with the facts of life as we know them ?

Surely it requires but elementary knowledge of the scientific facts, combined with an intelligent appreciation of the facts of personal experience, to see that this simple, popular theory has no sort of relation to either. It is a mere figment of the imagination.

Certainly it is true that the world-movement presents itself to our imagination as a gradual age-long progress, from dead matter (if matter can be spoken of in these days as "dead") to living, from simple and unconscious life-forms to higher and more complex ones, with rational life as the crown of the process—rational life, which itself has progressed so far that we are able now to imagine the world-process which has at last arrived at man as he is to-day. But, while the main idea of progress is thus justified, this progress is seen to be at no single point within the whole movement inevitable. Inevitable, certainly, *on the whole*, progress appears to be—but not inevitable for any part at any moment. For this upward movement is seen to take place at every point through struggle, a struggle blind and unconscious in the lower creation, but becoming at last in man—man conscious of a universe, able to understand a universal law—a matter of constant choice and constant purposive effort. And all the past history of the world is strewn with wrecks of those forms which have not survived in the struggle; and the world, as we see it to-day, is crowded, not only with life highly organized, progressive, pushing upwards, but everywhere, side by side with it, with life

in forms decadent, degenerate, parasitic, and, in this sense, fallen.

And, surely, in the history of man we see the same law of progress through effort, lifted to a higher plane. The world, as a whole, progresses. Man presses on to new and ever wider conquests in thought and in science. He sees ever a little more clearly into the hidden truth of things; he learns to master more surely the world in which he lives; he passes from scientific discovery to scientific discovery; he understands more perfectly the processes of his own thought; neither he nor the world stands still. But while this is true for mankind as a whole, it is by no means true that progress is inevitable at any point within the scheme; for nations and individuals alike, there is a constant alternative. Progress is never inevitable for anything less than the world at large, and the world at its highest. Looked at from within, the upward movement is seen to be dependent upon effort and choice. And we, who in this matter are the heirs of the ages, are really, for the first time in the world's history, able to gain a picture of this world-movement as a whole—able to grasp the great alternative which lies before each part of the whole. We see now—for the first time—that life is never stationary, that it is ever pressing onwards and upwards, and that it lies within our own choice to live in the forefront of the movement, seeking out the path of true progress, which faith alone can show us, and pressing on with

constant effort along that path towards the ideal which lies far off—of which, none the less, since it lies outside ourselves, and is no mere creation of man's own imagination, we catch hints and gleams sufficient to guide us on our way,—or, on the other hand, to give up the struggle and fall out of the movement of progress. Surely, in such a scheme as this there is room for sin—and sin which is no mere accident, no mere mishap by the way—sin which is a choice of the lower, a refusal of the higher alternative; sin, which is the ignoring of the ideal; sin, which is contentment with the actual.

And such a notion of sin is truly Biblical. Every word for sin used in the Bible implies nothing but such a refusal. There sin is a missing of the true aim, a disobedience to a voice—the voice which calls us onward and upward, a wilful ignorance or ignoring of that which ought to be known, a turning out of that upward path which is the path of life.

And sin is a thing wholly evil just because it is wholly negative. It can achieve nothing, accomplish nothing. Sin is no necessary stage towards achievement; no necessary step towards moral goodness. Temptation is certainly necessary. The alternative must be seen to be possible. There must be opportunity for the exercise of conscious choice, or there can be no such thing as moral goodness; but it is not necessary to sin in order that we may learn the horror of sin. On the contrary, it is those who have lived

lives most wholly free from sin, and have themselves followed most consistently the Divine voice, who have had the greatest horror of sin and have seen its issues most clearly. I know that sin has dimmed my vision of the ideal. I know that sin has weakened my will. I know that sin has rendered me less—not more able—to help my fellow-sinner. I see no way in which sin has worked good in me or through me. And in this respect sin seems to me to be totally different from everything else that we call evil. I see, for instance, on every side of me the good wrought by pain—I know the good pain has wrought in my own life ; but with sin it is otherwise. I see no good thing accomplished by sin. To do evil that good may come is not merely immoral, it is foolish ; for good can never be wrought by my moral evil. To argue, as is sometimes argued, that a sinner is better able than a saint to sympathize with and to help a sinner is simply to ignore facts. It always takes a saint to save a sinner, and none but the sinless One could redeem the world. In this, as in so many other cases, it is when we look at Jesus that we see the truth. In that He was tempted—and in all points tempted like as we are, *yet without sin*—He is able to succour them that are tempted.¹

And while we think of Him, let us notice again how wholly His teaching is in harmony with modern thought. The whole appeal of Jesus is to the pro-

¹ Heb. ii. 8 ; iv. 15.

gressive spirit, or to those for whom progress is possible—the discontented, the sinner. For those who are contented with themselves His appeal carries no weight. These are they whom He could not win ; they it was who crucified Him at the last. And in Jesus we approach that same truth from above to which the scientific doctrine seems to me to lead us, as it were, from below. In Him we realize that the voice which calls us onward and upward, which summons us to the life of effort and struggle, is the voice of the Father, Who loves us and “would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.”

There is no conflict, then, between modern thought and the doctrine of sin. We need only to be conscious of the gulf between the ideal and the actual to see what sin is. Nay, we need only to be honest with ourselves, to see how far we ourselves fall short of our own truest ideals, to become conscious of sin as a fact of experience.

CHAPTER VI

THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT

THE doctrine of sin leads us naturally to the thought of Atonement, and here we enter on ground which is broken and difficult. Almost any of the numerous little books attacking Christianity which pour from the press make the supposed doctrine of the Atonement the central point of attack. But the doctrine of the Atonement which they one and all consume in a blaze of fury is a doctrine that this average man has never heard preached in any one of the innumerable sermons it has been his privilege—or his pain—to hear. It bears no nearer kind of relation to any doctrine of the New Testament than that of extreme parody. It bears a nearer relation, perhaps, to the wholly unscriptural doctrine of Milton, which may still survive in some obscure meeting-houses, but is surely found nowhere else. Does anyone ever really hear nowadays of a God pouring out His wrath and vengeance upon a world of sinners and placated only by the agony of the Cross—a limitless wrath appeased by a limitless equivalent of pain? The doctrine of the Atonement is doubtless difficult to express in words,

and probably the average man who is no theologian will find difficulty in putting what he believes into words, but at least it may be good for him honestly to set down his own thoughts, even though he fail to help any other by so doing. I approach this question from the standpcint of experience, and not from the standpoint of theory. I ask myself what in my own experience has, as a matter of fact, saved sinners from sin and brought them to God, lifted them out of degradation and misery into an atmosphere of joy and peace. I answer: one thing and one thing only, love—the love of others for the sinner; love which has issued in tireless self-sacrifice; love which has led one man to give himself for another. At point after point in my own life I see that the thing which has saved me from sin—not from the punishment, which would be a poor thing—but from the sin itself, has been the love of others for me, a love which has issued in self-sacrifice on my behalf. And that which I see in my own case I see everywhere about me in the world. Only a little experience of mission-work in the slums of our great cities, only the story of a Dolling at work in a Portsmouth slum, only the knowledge that nothing but love for others has ever enabled me myself to help anyone else—only such experience and knowledge as this are needed to enable me to see that it is love alone which redeems, the love which issues in self-sacrifice—vicarious sacrifice, if you like.

And then I pass on to ask *how* this love saves.

And I see that it saves by its own compelling power, by which it first touches the sinner's heart, and then lifts him into its own atmosphere, and leads him on to the life of love and self-sacrifice. Until it has done this, its work is not done. In other words, that which is first done on behalf of the sinner comes to be done in and by him, as love awakens love, and sacrifice links itself on to sacrifice.

And if we ask what is the basic conviction which lies behind all salvation, I think that we shall find that it is the same conviction with which we started—the conviction that God has made us for Himself, and that no human heart can find its true rest until it rests in Him. It is this belief that sends out the saviours of the world to their work, and this belief which proves itself true as sinner after sinner finds peace in the heart of God.

And surely all this leads us inevitably to the Cross. There we see Him in Whom alone this conviction really formed the basis of all life, giving Himself in a consuming love to the uttermost point of self-sacrifice for the sinner whom nothing but love could save. We see Him "lifted up and drawing all men unto Himself," by the power of love and that victorious sacrifice which is efficacious for all men because He Who made it loved all men. And as we surrender ourselves to the appeal of the Cross, as we enter that atmosphere, not only do we find ourselves lifted into the presence of God, but we find our own hearts inflamed with

desire to give ourselves for others, to be the means of leading others into that joy which we ourselves have found. The sacrifice of the Cross saves us by making us the saviours of our fellows.

The relation of sacrifice—self-giving—to Atonement is thus plain. But more remains to be said as to the part which suffering plays. This question is obscured by the modern notion that suffering is the worst thing in the world. That is a notion wholly and utterly alien to Christianity. To a Christian sin, not suffering, is the one evil; suffering is only evil in so far as it is linked on to sin, and remains itself unredeemed. I propose, then, to consider the relation between suffering and sin, and I begin with the fact of sin and the results of sin as they are seen in actual everyday experience. Now, one plain and indisputable fact of experience is that sin—which is the refusal of the higher for the lower, the deliberate stopping of the ears to that Divine voice which is for ever calling us onwards and upwards, to the adventure of the spiritual life, to love and self-sacrifice and communion—this sin results always in loss, not only to the sinner, but to others. It is a fact of experience as plain as that none lives to himself and none dies to himself. Our lives are so inextricably intermingled and interdependent one upon another that the sin of one necessarily affects others for evil. This is true not only of the grosser sins, but of the sins we are apt to tolerate as though they were harmless—idleness,

carelessness, worldliness, vanity, and so on. If we stop to think, we cannot help seeing that the merely selfish man always, as he goes through life, not only misses life's secret himself, but in various ways causes loss and mischief to others. There is no selfish, self-indulgent act of mine which I cannot see, the moment I stop to think about it, working out its effects for ill in the lives and characters of others, sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly, through the subtle influence of a character, itself the product of acts of choice, upon the character of others.

The normal result of my sin, then, is loss to others, who have not themselves sinned. In a word, sin causes suffering to the innocent as well as to the guilty. This law is illustrated on a large scale in connection with the great social evils of our time, such as the suffering of the sweated poor, but it is a law which is absolutely universal. So sin, which is in one aspect a refusal to obey the Divine voice, is in another aspect an act of treachery against our neighbour. And this we see most clearly, of course, the moment we look at the Cross, where all kinds of sin, not merely or especially the gross sins, though these are doubtless represented, but the eminently respectable and widely tolerated sins—love of power, frivolous worldliness, disbelief in a living God, carelessness of truth and justice, and a hundred others—meet and are seen to bear their natural fruit in the crucifixion of Him Who is the Incarnate Innocence, the sinless Son of God.

Now if this be true, and I think it is true, we begin to see the one way in which even sin, the one and only evil in the world, may be overruled for good—*may* be, not *must* be, since here as always the necessary alternative, which runs right through a world where free-will is a fact, asserts itself. Suffering in the abstract presents itself to the imagination as a deplorable evil, and suffering in the concrete is often undoubtedly an evil which remains entirely unmitigated; but, on the other hand, everyone has seen this evil thing redeemed and transformed into the most wonderful and supreme blessing. Everyone knows the sick-room, to enter which is to enter a sanctuary, to leave which is to go forth refreshed as by a sacrament; the sick-room from which radiates an atmosphere of peace and strength and joy to everyone who enters it: it is the room where by deliberate consecration of will the sufferer has taken the apparently evil thing and turned it to good.

Yes, and experience witnesses, too, to many cases where suffering which is the direct result of sin has been the means of transforming the sinner, when once his heart has been touched and his will moved to the necessary acceptance and the necessary effort.

Again, experience presents case after case where the consecrated will has transformed the suffering caused by others into the very means by which other hearts have been touched and softened, and other wills directed towards the upward path.

Surely, then, it begins to be not incredible that the supreme case of innocent suffering, deliberately accepted by the wholly consecrated Will—borne by One Whose whole life in every aspect of it was dedicated to the service of mankind—may be the means of working atonement for all who allow their hearts to be touched and their wills moved by that unique spectacle.

As a matter of indisputable fact, through nineteen centuries of the world's history, atonement has been wrought in the case of countless thousands of human beings, of all nations, and kindreds, and tongues, by the spectacle of the Christ “openly set forth crucified” in the midst of time, and that atonement has been wrought, not outside the sinner, as ■ thing apart from him, but within the hidden springs of his own life. The historic occasion of Calvary has been lifted above the things of time into the regions of eternity, and the sinner who, contemplating that central act, has allowed it to have its natural effect upon his human heart, has found himself lifted into that same region, redeemed as a matter of his own experience by the blood of the Cross.

Thus it seems, to the present writer, that the problem of Atonement through vicarious suffering, which, like so many other problems, remains absolutely insoluble while it remains, as it were, in the air—a problem, not of life, but of abstract thought—finds its own practical solution for those who start where the average man is best qualified to start, from the basis of experience.

CHAPTER VII

THE ATONEMENT AND THE INDIVIDUAL

Now, if what has been said is true, it is obvious that—as William Law long ago pointed out—Christ “did not suffer in our place or stead, but only on our account, which is a quite different matter. And to say that He suffered in our place or stead is as absurd, as contrary to Scripture, as to say that He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven in our place and stead that we might be excused from it. For His sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension are all then equally *on our account*, for our sake, for our good, and benefit, but none of them possible in our stead.”¹

It is plain, then, that no atonement can be wrought for any sinner except through suffering on his part. In some way or another he must “be crucified with Christ” in order that Christ may live in him. The penitent sinner seeks, not to be let off punishment,

¹ Cf. “The Liberal and Mystical Writings of William Law,” with Introduction by W. Scott-Palmer (Longmans), p. 32.

but to bear in some way or another the shame and burden of his sin. Like St. Paul, he seeks "to fill up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for his body's sake, which is the Church."¹

The question for him is how he is to do this; how he is so to suffer for his sins as to enter into the reality of the Atonement. It is not enough to feel, as all men probably feel at some time or another, remorse for sin. Remorse is simply, in St. Paul's words, "the sorrow of the world that worketh death." Sorrow and suffering, as we have already seen, are not in themselves redeeming. It is the consecrated will alone that turns them to account. "The godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation"² is only possible to those who, through the spectacle of the Crucifixion, have been led to conversion, or the consecration of their wills to God. It is, of course, on Calvary itself that we see the two kinds of sorrow thrown into most vivid contrast. We see there two men suffering with Jesus; each of them no doubt bitterly regretting the folly that has brought him to his position of shame and suffering, but one of them converted by the contemplation of the atoning suffering, the forgiving love, of the Saviour, turning his own suffering to account by the acknowledgment before God and man of the justice of his fate, and his belief in the innocence and the supreme power of the Saviour; the other merely led by remorse to

¹ Col. i. 24.

² 2 Cor. vii. 10.

blasphemy: the one lightening the burden of the Saviour's agony by his confession, the other adding to it by his cruel refusal to answer to the appeal of suffering love.

Now there are, undoubtedly, in the mercy of God, many ways in which the converted sinner may enter through suffering into the mystery of the Atonement. Plainly he may—nay, he must—learn to consecrate the involuntary discipline of life to this end. When suffering comes, either of mind or of body, as come it must sooner or later—for the day comes to every man, as it came to the two thieves on Calvary, when he finds himself crucified with Christ—the believer will seek by an act of will to link his sufferings on to those of Him Who hangs upon that central cross. He will pray, no doubt, even as the Master prayed, that, if it be possible, the cup may pass from him, but he, too, will strive to make his submission to the Divine Will. In this way he will learn to triumph over pain and turn it to account, as he reaches out to sympathize with and minister to a suffering world, bearing the comfort wherewith he himself is comforted of God.¹ We shall return to this aspect of atoning suffering again in a later chapter. But our immediate point is this, that without suffering there is no atonement for the world or the individual. And since atonement stands at the beginning as well as at the end of the true life, since that aspect of Atonement

¹ 2 Cor. i. 4.

which we call forgiveness is the gateway, not the goal, of the consecrated life, the first desire of the seeker after life who is conscious of the burden of sin will be to find a way to enter through suffering—a real way, that is—into the peace of forgiveness. This brings us quite naturally to the consideration of what is commonly called “Sacramental Confession”—confession, that is, before God and man, which can never be understood by those who have failed to understand the principles which underly it. Nothing is surely more astonishing, whatever may be the opinions we may hold upon this question, than the extraordinary revival of the practice of private confession in recent years, in spite of the ingrained prejudice of the average Englishman against it. It is worth our while, from any point of view, to weigh well the considerations which have led, and are leading, so many men and women, as a matter of actual fact, to the use of sacramental confession at the present time. Now, for my part, I am convinced that the main consideration influencing man in this direction is simply the desire to make the Atonement a real living experience by an act which links the sin repented of to the pain and shame which are its just reward. The average Englishman is not brought up to look upon confession before a priest as a necessary formal step to receiving Communion. Please God, he will never be brought up so to regard it, despite a strong tendency

in certain quarters to teach the use of confession in this, which I believe to be the characteristically Roman, though really uncatholic, way. But, just because the average Englishman comes to confession, if he comes at all, as the result of a genuine conversion, and, in many cases, a real victory over an ingrained prejudice, the absolution he receives will have the deeper meaning and power in his life.

A man awakes for the first time, perhaps, to the need of reality in his religion. He meditates for the first time upon the meaning of the Cross for him. He sees for the first time, not sin in the abstract, but his own sin working itself out in that way, which is two and yet somehow only one—as an outrage against God and man—an outrage against God Who is seen in the Incarnation identifying Himself with man. He looks back over the past of his own life, and sees in case after case how his own sins have resulted in suffering and loss to others. Even the sins which no human eye has seen have weakened his will, darkened his imagination, lowered his character, and made his influence less powerful for good. The more he realizes this, the more he realizes how all sin meets in the Cross where Innocence is Crucified by the sin of common men. And that same Cross which is at once a revelation of the effect of sin and a revelation of Love is also a call to reality. The convicted sinner wants above all things to be real in his penitence. He feels that whether it ought to be so or not, it is a

comparatively easy thing to kneel in private and make confession to God only. It is even easier and even less real to join in church in a monotonous acknowledgment that "we have erred and strayed like lost sheep" . . . but does not reality, does not common honesty, demand something more than this? It is against God and man, against God in man, that he has sinned. Before he can be really at one with God, must he not also make atonement with man? Can he really approach God as though He was as it were isolated from man for this purpose only? As his sin has been against God and man, ought not his penitence to be at once an act of atonement with God and man?

By some such process of reasoning a man may come to see that although private confession may not be necessary for every individual, yet it may be for him, at least, a thoroughly honest and manly way of making his penitence real—a way which involves a very real bearing of the Cross of shame and sorrow. Nor do I believe that a man who comes along such a path as this will ever regret coming. To many it will be the beginning of a really consecrated life. Nor do any of the common objections urged against the practice of private confession, almost always by those who know nothing of it from experience, carry weight against such a confession as this. It is said, for instance, that confession before man weakens character and destroys independence. But a confession such as this, involving a real break with past prejudice,

a real effort of will, a courageous bearing of such bitter shame and humiliation, as only those who have been through the experience can understand, cannot possibly weaken character. That there is a kind of habitual confession—the confession of constantly repeated and not really repented of sins, of the breaking of rules, often of the most arbitrary and formal character—which is really bad for the so-called penitent, I am not concerned to deny. Nor am I blind to the obvious danger of relying too much upon direction, which may or may not be wise. But to this objection it is sufficient, I think, to answer, first, that the danger of too complete submission to individual guidance is at least as real in the case of those who sit at the feet of the popular preacher as in the case of those who go to Confession ; and secondly, that the wise confessor always remembers and is careful to teach his penitent that direction is entirely independent of Confession and Absolution.

There may be amongst the penitents some who will need much counsel and advice, but the wise Confessor's aim for them all is to lead them on to that true independence which comes from the following of the Spirit. But surely the real danger for most of us Englishmen is less that of a false dependence upon others than that of an equally false independence. We are apt to forget how intimately, by our nature and by the circumstances of life, we are bound up with our fellows. We are only too ready to say glibly that no man shall come

between us and God, and yet experience and the teaching of the Bible alike condemn this attitude. The moment we stop to reflect we see that while we are bound to acknowledge that life and all that ministers to life comes from God indeed, yet, even so, it comes only through our fellow-men, who are to us, as we are in our turn to others, mediators. This, I say, is the experience of life. The life that comes to us from God is mediated to us through our human parents. The bread that we eat and the clothes that we wear come to us from God, indeed, but through the labour and service of countless multitudes of our fellow-men. There is indeed a sinister sense, as Father Waggett has somewhere pointed out, in which men come between us and God, as we, alas ! have ourselves come between others and God. Every man who by his own selfishness, worldliness, thoughtlessness, and lack of self-control, has made it harder for others to know or serve God has come between souls and God ; every careless and lukewarm and conventional church-goer, whose religion sits so lightly upon him as to have no apparent influences upon his daily life, is constantly coming between earnest souls and their Maker, but the priest who ministers to penitent souls is really the man of all men who steps aside and makes way for souls to come to God. These others stand like a wall between men and the true Light ; he it is whose hand opens the window through which the Light shines upon those who without his ministry might remain in the darkness.

It is a fact of experience and a truth no less of the Bible that God is mediated to men through their fellow-men. "Who can forgive sins but God only?" ask the Pharisees, who are themselves, though they know it not, the great barrier between souls and God. "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins," answers the Man who in Himself sums up the ways of God to men. A true belief in the Incarnation carries with it a profound faith in the power and presence of God mediated to man by man here on earth, not far off in some future heaven beyond the clouds.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RISEN CHRIST

It is obvious from what has already been said that belief in the Incarnation and belief in the Atonement are bound up with belief in the Resurrection. Indeed, it is not too much to say that according to the New Testament it was belief in the Resurrection which led to belief in the Incarnation on the part of those who had not known Christ after the flesh. We have only to read the Acts of the Apostles to see that the Resurrection was from the first the central topic of the Apostolic preaching. Jesus Christ, "Who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh," cries St. Paul, "was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead."¹ The Christian religion stands or falls with the doctrine of the Resurrection. "If Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins."²

Now the Creed of the Church makes no assertion as to the manner of the Resurrection, and in view of the

¹ Rom. i. 3.

² 1 Cor. xv. 17.

controversies which still rage round this supremely difficult question the average man may quite rightly plead for the right to hold his judgment in suspense. It is the fact that matters, not the method, nor even the precise details of the way in which the first disciples became convinced of the fact. But the believer may quite rightly be asked to give a reason for his faith and the hope that depends upon that faith, and to this believer faith seems to have come along three lines. First I believe in the Resurrection, because of the tremendous facts of the origin, and continued growth and present existence of the Christian Church.

The most radical and thoroughgoing criticism of the synoptic Gospels and the Acts has pushed back their date so far, that there is no longer any reasonable ground for doubting that the belief that the Master Whom they had seen crucified, had been raised to life, and had revealed Himself, even to the silencing of the doubtful among them, was the foundation of the astonishing faith and enthusiasm of the first disciples and the whole early Church. This, as we have already said, is the burden of all the early preaching of the Apostles. It is the central topic in every one of the five sermons ascribed to St. Peter in the Acts.¹ It alone gives point to St. Stephen's confession of faith.² It is the central theme of St. Paul's first missionary sermon,³ no less than of his undisputed

¹ Acts ii. 14-46; iii. 12-26; iv. 8-12; v. 29-32; x. 34-43.

² *Ibid.*, vii. 56.

³ *Ibid.*, xiii. 28-31.

Epistles. But indeed there is no need to labour the point. It is already conceded by the critics. But this remarkable series of facts:—the fact of the Apostolic faith, the fact of the Apostolic preaching, the fact of the widespread success of that preaching (witnessed to, not only by the early records, but by the present existence of the Church built upon this foundation), calls for a rational explanation. And to my mind the most rational explanation is the simplest. The Apostles preached the risen Christ because they had experience of the risen Christ. The world came to believe in the risen Christ because it, too, accepting the Apostles' testimony, came to a like experience. So the results of the Resurrection are for me the first proof that the Resurrection actually took place.

Again, it seems to me that you cannot surrender faith in the Resurrection without accepting as a logical consequence that pessimistic creed against which the deepest instincts of the heart rise up in rebellion. If the sublime faith of Jesus was really ended by the death on the Cross, if God was not His Father, as He thought, and taught—then “vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” There really was something in that taunt of His foes, “He trusted in God, let Him deliver Him if He will have Him.”¹ It is an unconscious witness to the demand of reason that so profound a trust should be justified. If one is asked to believe

¹ St. Matt. xxvii. 43.

that a life which appeals directly to the conscience and heart of every normal man as of supreme and unique worth can be ended and done with, as far as he who lived it is concerned, by so dreadful and shameful a death as the Crucifixion, one must reply that to make such a surrender is equivalent to giving up all faith in the rationality of the universe.

Lastly, I would say that the doctrine of the Resurrection, once accepted, with all that follows from it, proves its value to the average man in life. It proves its value by giving him exactly the support that he needs in the dark hours of his own life. It at once illuminates, and is illuminated by, those tragic experiences. Here as elsewhere the Creed enlarges life, even as life interprets the Creed.

The believer finds in the assurance of the Master's triumph over the worst assaults of evil, and the fiercest pangs of sorrow, suffering and temptation the promise of his own triumph in the darkest experiences of life.

When those experiences come, he flings himself back upon One Who has been through them all Himself, Who has attained to life through suffering and death, Who therefore understands and cares, Who, "in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted is able to succour them that are tempted."¹ In His name he sets himself to shoulder the Cross, and finds in doing so a new courage and a new hopefulness. So as life goes

¹ Heb. ii. 18.

on his own accumulating experience confirms ever more and more his initial act of faith. He has proved it and not found it to fail. Nay, more than this, through experience he has come to know within himself the unconquered and unconquerable Christ. And this personal experience, as we shall see more fully in a subsequent chapter, is confirmed by the experience of others. It is not merely personal, merely subjective. It has been, and is, shared by countless thousands of sufferers of all ages and in all places. It is in very truth the catholic experience of a catholic faith. The tremendous fact of the difference which the acceptance of the fact of the Resurrection has made to a suffering world is brought home over and over again to those whose privilege it is to witness the spiritual triumphs of suffering believers, and to set over against them the alternative experiences of suffering met, on the one hand, by open rebellion, against what is regarded only as an evil fate, or, on the other, by mere Stoicism, which is often wonderful indeed, but seems powerless to lift the sufferer, as faith can and does lift him, into that region where suffering is transcended in the victory of the Spirit.

In regard to the doctrine of the Resurrection, then, as in regard to the other doctrines of the Christian Creed, the road to belief is not hard to find, however hard it be to follow. Behind all faith lies first of all the same fundamental assumption which lies behind all science, that we are living in a rational universe.

That is indeed a great assumption, but it is one we are bound to make if we are to make any progress at all, and it is one which is ultimately justified by experience and experience alone. Secondly, we must be prepared to accept, as certainly worthy, at least, of investigation, what has been proved to be the common testimony of a body of our fellow-men, a testimony which has, as a matter of indisputable fact, profoundly affected the whole course of the world's history for many centuries. Thirdly, we must be prepared to put the doctrine to the test of life, remembering that its ultimate purpose is wholly practical. It claims to be not merely the answer to an intellectual riddle, but a clue to escape from a maze.

I think that those who follow this method with an open mind will be led at last by the Spirit of God to such a faith as will enable them to repeat with honest and glowing conviction the words: "I believe in Jesus Christ, Who . . . rose again from the dead."

CHAPTER IX

THE CHRIST OF THE GOSPELS

THE experience of the Church has proved that belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the Lord and Saviour of men, is not at the mercy of critics, however hostile they may be. Over and over again the confident assertion has been made that in the light of modern knowledge faith in Him is no longer possible. But even while the critics were asserting that none of the Gospels and few of the Epistles were written before the middle of the second century, faith in Christ lived on, and waited in patience for the answer which it knew must one day be found to the assertions of unbelief.

Now we have seen the dates of the Gospels and the Acts pushed further and further back, with general agreement, until the Synoptists are all well within the latter half of the first century, and even the Johannine authorship of the Fourth Gospel appears to some critics to be less doubtful than of old.

But the point that I desire to make here is this—that the Gospels prove their essential truth in life.

It is quite true that it is no longer possible for an educated person to hold the old uncritical view which made the accepted text of the Bible the final proof of the events therein recorded. Belief in the Bible was once, no doubt, of something the same uncritical nature as the belief still occasionally found among the poor, in spite of the halfpenny papers, in regard to the daily Press. "I read it in the newspaper, so it must be true." "The Bible says so, and there's an end of the matter."

Superior persons may sneer, if they like, at so uncritical a faith, yet a truer insight will see in it an element of the sublime, and recognize that it brings its possessor nearer to the truth than a cynical scepticism could ever bring him.

The fact is that belief in the Bible could never have held its own in the face of hostile criticism unless it had indeed brought men into touch with reality. The Gospels have lived, and will continue to live, because they supply, or at least help to supply, a real need of the soul. To the humble and sincere seeker after truth, they prove their own essential truth. It may be discovered that the vessels in which the treasure is contained are earthen, but the treasure is none the less treasure, for all that. Our opinion as to the trustworthiness of this or that text may be altered. We may feel that it is no longer possible to prove the truth of doctrines by reference to a catena of texts in quite the way to which we were once accustomed.

We may be less sure than of old that this or that particular passage gives us the exact words of Jesus.

“ Yet, peradventure, shall diviner seem,
The chronicle of a severer truth,
Than all the fabulous colouring of the dream
That tinted it so richly in our youth.

“ And yet, for all the puzzle of the lines,
All the discordant copies stained with age,
A more miraculous lore it intertwines,
A grander Christ looks radiant from its page.”¹

It is a fact of experience that on the one hand the soul hungers for a Saviour, and on the other the Gospel tells us of, and tell us how to find, God our Saviour. Full of interest as this life is, it needs an interpretation. It is not that I am simply a hopeless pessimist, pronouncing this life evil. On the contrary, I enjoy hugely the common life of this world; but I find here no sure foothold, no central clue, no certain and abiding foundation for life. Nay, the more richly I enjoy the world, the more weary I become. I have just been reading that altogether delightful and graceful story, “Mr. Ingleside,” and I find there set forth with Mr. Lucas’s inimitable charm, exactly what I feel. Mr. Ingleside has most things after which less fortunate men hanker; but he has lost faith, and all life is tinged with a kind of delicate sadness and sense of disillusionment, which the world can give, but cannot take away. Now the Gospels, on the other hand, tell me of One Who promises a joy which

¹ Archbishop Alexander, “The New Atlantis.”

the world cannot give, and is equally powerless to take away. They give me, in a series of different portraits by different artists, the figure of One Who asks me to believe in Him. They, and the remaining books of the New Testament, give an account of the effect of His presence alike upon those who received and upon those who rejected His message. They tell me how those who believed in Him were in very deed saved from failure, and sin, and hopelessness. They tell me, moreover, that His appeal was universal, that His claims were for all time, that He Himself triumphed over the darkest defeat that this world could inflict, and is alive for evermore.

Now, if these documents stood alone, and could rightly be treated as some critics do, in fact, treat them, as so many isolated compositions, with no wider reference than the necessary one to the circumstances of the age which produced them, their appeal might be historically or romantically interesting, and it would leave me moved, no doubt, as some great novel moves me, by the poignancy of its human interest and the surpassing greatness of its art; but it would leave me untouched in regard to that central need of which I spoke just now. But the documents do not stand alone. Not merely are they themselves the product of a living society which has not only continued to live, but has spread over the face of the world, but the effect of their acceptance as vitally true by countless millions of souls, not of one age or race alone, but of every age and every race, has been that these souls

have, as a matter of actual experience, found that salvation for which they longed. There are hundreds of thousands of men and women living at the present time whose whole outlook upon life and whole manner of living has been utterly and entirely changed by the fact that the Gospel story has led them to put their trust in a living, personal, Divine Redeemer. They have needed a Saviour. The Gospels have told them of a Saviour. They have trusted the Gospels, and sought a Saviour in the way the Gospels told them to seek Him—by prayer, and sacrament, and fellowship. So seeking Him, they have found Him. Born anew of water and of the Holy Spirit, they have entered into the kingdom of God.

Among that multitude which no man can number, I humbly take my stand—a man redeemed, saved by no personal achievement, but by faith in the love of God, of which the Gospels have told me. The critics may say what they like. They did not give me Jesus; they cannot take Him away. Many of them have illuminated His words; many of them have thrown light upon His character; many of them have helped to make Him more human and more real by their patient study and God-given insight; others seem to me to have failed utterly to get within measurable distance of the truth concerning Him, because they have been more interested in their own theories than in Him; they have wanted to be original, and their efforts after originality have ended in banality.

The plain truth is that the critics are a mixed multitude of men, of like passions with ourselves. And, like ourselves, they are divided. Some of them have been born anew of water and of the Spirit, and have seen, and entered into, the kingdom of God ; others, brilliant possibly in intellectual endowment, of amazing industry and commendable patience, have never seen the kingdom of God, because they have never passed through the necessary spiritual experience. They have remained blind, because they have never known, as a fact of personal experience, the new birth.

For the thing that proves for me the substantial truth of the Gospels is that they have at once moulded and explained my own spiritual experience. I have felt, I feel over and over again, the need of redemption. World-weary, I have longed, and do long, for peace. The Gospels have spoken, and still speak, of a Redeemer, the Prince of Peace. They have set before me the kind of way in which I may find Him ; they have spoken to me of the society of those who have found Him—a society from which they themselves have sprung, of which they are at this moment the sacred literature. The path to which they have pointed is, in a sense, a lonely one. It has its special aspect for me as an individual. I myself have to tread it. No one can take my place or go through its experiences for me. On the other hand, I do not journey alone. I go hand-in-hand with a great body of fellow-pilgrims. We all enter upon the path by a

common, narrow gateway ; we pass through similar experiences ; we are fed on common food ; we tread most securely and progress most surely when we are helping others into the way or cheering along their path our disheartened fellow-pilgrims.

And peace, and joy, and salvation, redemption and the Redeemer, are at once my ultimate goal, and already, in a measure, my present experience as I journey through life upon this road. And though the path is a hard one, there is for me no joy and no peace, nor any communion with an Unseen Love, except when I am facing its perils and enduring its temptations. It runs utterly contrary to the ways of the world. In them I get the joy first, the sadness afterwards. Along this path joy is always the climax. Every hardship faced with courage, every disappointment manfully endured, every real effort made, brings a present joy, and a promise of greater joy yet to be. It is a law of the Gospel, and a law of living experience, that the Son of man *must* suffer if He is to enter into His glory. It is a truth of Christian experience that: "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse ; but *Thou* hast kept the good wine until now."

The Gospels, then, take a definite place in my religious life ; they become for me part of the environment in which I find, as a fact, that my soul lives. They are not the whole of that environment by any means. "The Bible only" religion is not my religion,

nor, curiously enough, is it the religion of the Bible itself. "Jesus only" does indeed cover the whole ground, and, for me, the real joy of the New Testament is that it gives me a series of illuminating portraits of my living Master. Portraits, indeed, the New Testament gives me—not photographs—and it is the more interesting, and the more revealing from that fact. Who would not learn more of the true character of a great man from the study of three several portraits—by Sargent, say, and Ouless and Cope—than from three photographs? The portraits would, of course, tell me not only something of their subject, but would reveal something, too, of the artists who painted them. Each artist would betray something of his own individuality by the very light his picture would throw on the character of his sitter, and each would contribute something which the others would miss to my knowledge and understanding of the man whom they painted; and so it is with the New Testament. I know no more interesting way of reading the books of the New Testament than to do so with the object of discovering and comparing the portraits of our Lord given us by St. Mark, St. Luke, St. Matthew, St. Paul, and St. John.

I believe that to do so, as far as may be without prepossessions, focusing attention separately on each separate portrait, noticing the distinctive traits of each, and then comparing and contrasting the results, is to get a wonderfully enriched conception

of the character and person of Jesus, and, at the same time, a deepened conviction that, in spite of the wide divergence alike in point of view and in aim and method of the writers named, it is One Person whom all alike, each in his own way and with his own particular purpose, is attempting to convey to others. The attempt, for instance, to find a contradiction between the Christ of St. Paul and the Jesus of Nazareth, of the Synoptists, breaks down as you try to realize from St. Paul's allusions the personality of the "Christ and Him crucified," Who loved him and gave Himself for him, from Whose love nothing can separate him, Whom he strives ever to preach to others. For example, the meaning of the famous thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians is illustrated and illuminated when one substitutes for "charity" the name of Jesus. Then you get a portrait of the Jesus of the Synoptists—Jesus suffered long and was kind, He envied not, vaunted not Himself, was not puffed up, did not behave Himself unseemly, sought not His own, was not easily provoked, thought no evil, rejoiced not in iniquity, but rejoiced in the truth; bore all things, believed all things, endured all things—and He it is, so St. Paul found, and so he ever preached, who never faileth.

But it is no part of my present purpose to dwell in detail upon the results of such a method of reading the New Testament as is here proposed. My real point is this, that while the critics search, as they are

searching, for the historic Jesus, by what one may call, I think rightly, the scientific method, and, by so doing, do indeed enrich our knowledge and enlarge our outlook—so long as we remember, even while they sometimes forget, the special nature of their task, and the narrow limits within which for their own purpose they must needs confine themselves—we, who are not scientific specialists, but common men and women, in need of a living Saviour, may contribute our share to the world's knowledge by presenting to men, in life and in word, as the result of our wider and less specialized search, a living portrait of the living Christ of our experience. Biologists, physiologists, and anatomists dissect the dead body of a man, and give us, as the result of their labours, a picture of its structure and a history of its development. They may tell us something, perhaps, concerning its manner of life and the way in which it met its death, but the meaning and value and power of the life itself which used that body as its organ—the life which, perhaps, propagated itself in other lives, and influenced in all kinds of ways the lives of hundreds and thousands of men and women—they can tell us nothing. To discover these things, we need the testimony of witnesses of another kind, who may know nothing of biology, but can yet tell us much of life. And this thought is my own comfort and help in the hour when I am weary of the endless discussions and dissections of the Gospel critics, and feel myself unfitted to decide the questions

upon which they themselves are at issue. Enough for me that my own reading of the New Testament, thin and poor and unscientific though it be, has given me a vision of the Christ of the Gospels which at once corresponds with and enriches my vision of the Christ of my own experience—the Christ Whom I have sought and found in the lives of my fellow-believers; the secret of the life of the Church, the reality of every Sacrament—the Christ Who, as I have made the adventure of faith to which the Church has called me, has become, and remains while I walk along her paths, with however lame and stumbling feet, the hidden occupant of my own heart, my own inspiration to work and service, my own strength and stay in the hour of darkness and desolation—in a word, my own true life and my only hope in death.

BOOK II

THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

CHAPTER X

THE MEANING OF SALVATION

THERE is a well-known legend of the great Bishop Westcott that one day he was accosted by a fellow-occupant of a railway carriage, an earnest member of the Salvation Army, with the inquiry, “Are you saved?” and that the Bishop made answer with characteristic gentleness and courtesy, “Sir, do you mean *σωζόμενος*, *σώθεις*, or *σεσώσμενος*?”

Whether true or not, the story contains for all religious folk, and not least for preachers of religion, a lesson worth the learning. There is, indeed, need for all of us to think out from time to time the commonplace words of religion. For, in the first place, words, being as of course they are, mere symbols, and themselves the product of one particular age, and symbolic of the living thought of that age, are apt to lose their orginal meaning and to become symbolic of some other thought at a later

stage in history. Thus, as we all know, the word "comfortable" which now denotes a feeling of ease, carrying with it some thought of luxury and softness, conveyed in the English of three centuries ago the quite different sense of "strength" and "succour." Our religious symbols may easily convey to us another meaning than that which they conveyed to our fore-fathers. Moreover—and this is a fruitful cause of unsettlement in religion—words stand for different ideas at different stages in our own individual life. And if, as we grow up, there is no corresponding enlargement of the ideas which were all that the words of our religion could symbolize for us in the days of childhood, we find ourselves only too readily thinking that the childish idea is all the words stand for, and then our religion must seem to us totally inadequate to meet the real needs of our life. So the central law of religion itself—the law of death unto life—holds good for the very words in which all our religion is enshrined. The words must die in their old inadequate meaning, that they may rise again in their fuller meaning at each stage of our religious progress.

Perhaps among the many causes of the widespread failure of the Church to retain her hold even over those whom in early life she has had real opportunities of training, the neglect of this elementary fact is not the least. Her preachers are preaching and officiating in a language which means one thing to them and another to their people. Thus, to take an extreme

instance, if while a preacher is exhorting his hearers to "believe and be saved," the latter attach to "belief" only the common idea of assent to an inherently improbable fact, and picture "salvation" as a mere escape from a no less improbable future torment in flames of material fire, while to the preacher himself the words have come to symbolize ideas totally different from these, it is obvious that the congregation may easily remain entirely untouched, or touched quite otherwise than the preacher intends, because they are, in fact, living in one world and he in another. He would, indeed, be better preaching in a foreign language, for that his hearers would know that they did not understand, while this, because they think they understand it, merely leads them astray.

Now, the central word of the Christian religion is "salvation." "Jesus," we teach our children, means "God our Saviour," and He came to save His people from their sins. And if we are wise we at least go on to emphasize the fact that it is their sins, not the due reward of their sins—the pain and sorrow which necessarily follow in the track of sin—from which He came to save them. But even this idea, true and necessary though it is as far as it goes, is inadequate. It is inadequate, whether regarded as a summary of Gospel teaching or as an answer to the soul's needs. For, indeed, the soul needs something infinitely wider than salvation *from* its present state; and if the word "salvation" contained no more for us than this back-

ward-looking meaning—this mere escape from bondage and death—it would, necessarily, cease to hold its place as the central word of religion. And it is because for many men it holds only such meaning as this that it has for them ceased to hold any valid meaning at all.

But the old symbol has survived so long, is, indeed, one of those eternal words which “shall never pass away,” because it stands for so much more than men in their haste and ignorance are prone to see. It is no mere negative word, speaking only of escape from sin; it looks forward as well as backward—comes to look forward, perhaps, even more than backward. It tells of a setting free, but it tells also of a larger life to which it sets free. It brings hope to the prisoner, not a mere hope of sundered chains and broken bars, but of the large, free life without, in a great and glorious world—a life larger and freer than he has ever yet known.

This, surely, is plain enough when we study the teaching of the New Testament. ‘*Η πίστις σου σέσωκέ σε.*’ On four separate occasions our Lord uses the words which in our Version are translated once, “Thy faith hath saved thee,”¹ and three times, “Thy faith hath made thee whole”²; and in each case we perhaps tend naturally enough to let our minds dwell upon what I have called the backward-looking meaning of the

¹ Luke vii. 50.

² Mark v. 34, (Luke viii. 48); Mark x. 52; Luke xvii. 19.

word salvation. The woman that was a sinner is set free from the burden of guilt. The woman with an issue of blood is set free from weakness and weariness. The blind man is liberated from the world of darkness, the leper from the long-drawn misery of his outcast existence. The compassion of the reader lingers upon the misery of the past and the glory of the sudden relief, and there, for the most part the mind stops, where in each case the story stops. We do not go on to think of that "salvation" becoming an ever-greater wonder, an ever-widening experience as in all kinds of ways the saved one finds him or herself the possessor of a new power over circumstances, an increasing fulness of life. To them, in after years, the salvation which once they looked upon as something almost beyond hoping for; and, once again, as something which they might hope to find in Jesus, though all other hope had failed; and yet again, in the moment of delivery, as the achieved end of their passionate prayer and longing, must have come to seem less an end than a beginning—the beginning of secure progress, starting from an experience of the love of God, which contained in itself the promise of a continued and enlarging experience of that same inexhaustible love. And this promise was limited only by the necessity of the continuance on their side of that same trusting faith which had conditioned their first experience of salvation.

The salvation, then, of the Gospel looks forward as

well as backward—forward, perhaps, even more than backward. And this explains the use of the words “saved” and “salvation” which we find in the other books of the New Testament. “The Lord added to the Church daily those that were being saved.”¹

In one sense, by the Incarnation, the life, the words, the death and resurrection of Jesus, we have been saved.² In that universal salvation we ourselves were given our individual share when we entered the Church, which is the society of the saved, at our own baptism. As, accepting that salvation, we learn to progress securely through life, with an ever-widening and ever-deepening experience of the love of God and man, in the glory of worship and of service, we may claim to be “in the way of salvation,” “being saved,” “working out our own salvation in fear and trembling.”³

“We learn to progress securely through life, with an ever-widening, ever-deepening experience of the love of God and man, in the glory of worship and of service . . .” In that sentence I have summed up what I at least mean by salvation. To me salvation means the experience of love; and the attainment of full and complete and final salvation is simply being made perfect in love. All else is at least subsidiary to that. A man may achieve wealth, fame, power, any of those

¹ *τοὺς σωζομένους.* Acts ii. 47 (R.V.).

² Eph. ii. 5.

³ Cf. 1 Cor. xv. 2; 2 Cor. ii. 15; Phil. ii. 12.

prizes for which men spend their lives, but if he knows not love he knows not the meaning of life. He is lost, not saved. Browning had discovered the secret when he wrote that—

“ Our life, with all it yields of joy and woe,
And hope and fear, . . .
Is just our chance o’ the prize of learning love,
How love might be, hath been indeed, and is.”¹

Life has been defined as “a sum of relationships,” and love is the perfection of relationships. The human soul is so constituted that it hungers for love, and starves if love be denied it. Vainly we seek to satisfy our souls on other food than this. And while life lasts there is room for progress in love, wherefore the New Testament still matches and illuminates experience when it teaches us not to be content with present attainment, but “forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,” to “press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Full and final salvation lies far off in the future still, but, thank God, it is now “nearer than when we believed,”² and through that initial faith first experienced that salvation which Jesus, Who is Love incarnate, long ago made possible for us all in its completeness, by His life and His death; that salvation to the possible experience of which, in the fullest and widest way,

¹ R. Browning: “A Death in the Desert.”

² Rom. xiii. 11; cf. Rom. v. 9, 10.

we, as separate individuals, were admitted and dedicated in the moment of baptism.

Is there, then, we may ask in conclusion, any truth at all in that old so intolerant-sounding phrase, "No salvation outside the Church"? Of course there is. There is a sense in which the phrase is most untrue; but there is another sense in which it is strictly and literally true. Every individual may be saved, but no individual can be saved alone. If life is a sum of relationships, and love is the perfection of relationships, and so the ultimate meaning of life, it follows, necessarily, that salvation is a social matter. Every individual may be saved, but no one can be saved as an individual. The experience of salvation is the experience of being linked on by love to other souls who are with us linked on by love to God. So they who insist upon communion with the Church as a necessity of salvation are, indeed, emphasizing a vital truth, though sometimes, one fears, they forget its inner meaning in their very zeal, and, so forgetting, set it forth in such a way as to repel rather than attract. No doubt there are many who in word would repudiate this necessity of a Church, yet by a happy contradiction illustrate its truth unknowingly in their lives. There be many who are of the Church all unwittingly. But, in spite of this admission, I would go further, and I would say that, as a matter of fact, those who accept the doctrine of the Church in its fullest meaning, with all those high sacramental

doctrines associated particularly with the idea of the Catholic Church, do, indeed, here and now experience, in so far as they are literally faithful, a wider salvation than is possible to those without; because for the sacramentalist, material things, no longer to him, as they are to the natural man, barriers between his soul and God, are ministrant to the soul's needs, windows through which the light of love shines upon his life. So I am happy in the Church, because in the Church I first experienced the joy of salvation; because in the Church I am perpetually reminded of the social character of salvation; because in the Church I am ever entering into new and fuller experience of salvation as new opportunities occur of ministering and being ministered to in love; because in the Church I find all material things transfigured by and made ministrant to the final end of life, which is love; because in the Church I am taught to look back to love as the beginning of all things and forward to the fullest, widest, deepest experience of love as the end of all things; because in the Church I am taught this, that, unworthy though I am, I have been called of God that I may long and labour with all other saved men "for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ: till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."¹

¹ Ephes. iv. 12, 13.

CHAPTER XI

THE LOST WORLD AND THE SAVED CHURCH

If what has been said is true, salvation depends upon faith, and faith means the recognition of and personal trust in God as He is revealed in Christ Jesus. The Church has summarized the teaching of the Gospel about God in the Trinitarian Creed. Down the ages she has directed the attention of all who desire to walk safely amid the perils and temptations of life to this Creed. Salvation, she says, is for those who keep this faith whole and undefiled, worship this God to whom the Creed points, and live a life of good works consonant with that Creed. Now it is not to be denied that there is a way of presenting this witness which both sounds and is as intolerant and as far from the spirit of Christ as that picture of the joy of the saints in heaven, which some have painted of old, as heightened by the contemplation of the torments of the damned. But if we stop to think the matter out I think we shall find that those who assert that the objection to the Church's witness and warnings is merely sentimental are not wholly wrong. First it must be pointed out that nowhere does the Church

assert, as she is sometimes accused of asserting, that a man is saved by an intellectual assent to a verbal proposition. In the Athanasian Creed, which is by universal consent the sternest of all the Church's utterances, the keeping of the faith whole and undefiled is defined as a wholly practical affair. It is true that the doctrine of the Trinity is set forth in this symbol with a fulness and subtlety of expression which the average man feels is beyond him. Ignorant, as a rule, alike of the history of the Creed and the meaning of the theological terms employed, he is puzzled by being asked, as he not unnaturally puts it, to give his assent to a series of propositions he cannot understand, and to express his belief in the damnation of others who are no more able than he to understand the Creed in which they are asked to believe. Crude as this objection may seem to the theologian, it does appear to the present writer that it would be an act of charity to modify the rubric requiring the constant recitation of the *Quicunque vult* in the interest of the average churchgoer who is puzzled and distressed by thoughts of this kind. That such a modification of practice does not in the least involve the abandonment of the Church's witness to the necessity of faith in Christ Jesus is surely plain when the late origin of the Creed is remembered.¹

¹ The present Bishop of Gloucester (Dr. Gibson) says: "The *Quicunque vult* cannot have been written before 420. It is very possibly earlier than 450. It cannot be later than the sixth century" ("The Three Creeds," Longmans, p. 193).

In any case, the teaching as to the necessity of belief in the doctrines of the Creed ought to be safeguarded continually by teaching as to the impossibility of expressing the truth concerning the innermost being of God in any verbal symbol at all. Indeed, as has often been pointed out, we cannot know God in His innermost being. We only know Him at all in His relations to men, and it is this very truth which makes a practical belief in the Creed so important to men.

But the point that I wish to urge at the present moment is this—that the worth of the Creed, since it is so eminently practical, can only be discovered by an appeal to the facts of life. Salvation, as we have already seen, is not a far-off future event, though its consummation lies ever in the future. The question is, then, whether or no those who do indeed accept the Creed are in fact “saved,” and whether the world which rejects the Creed is in fact lost. Now, to the present writer the first relevant fact in this discussion appears to be this—that the world has frankly abandoned its nominal adherence to the Church and her formulas. The majority of men do not, as a matter of fact, keep the Catholic Faith and practice, and a vast number of others give a real assent only to some portion of the Faith, and make no real effort to live the life which that Faith implies. In a word, the world of the present day does not keep the Catholic Faith whole and undefiled. And the second relevant fact is that

the world presents no appearance of being " saved " in any real sense of the word. Men (who have abandoned the Faith of the Creed) are as a matter of actual and literal fact lost. Look out upon the modern world as it presents itself to your gaze, and ask yourself whether the world is in fact in a state of salvation.

Walk down Regent Street, and count the number of crystal-gazers, soothsayers, and fortune-tellers advertised by the sandwichmen ; look into the faces of the fashionable persons who pass from luxuriously appointed motor-cars into the fashionable shops ; look again into the pathetic faces of those fantastically dressed human wrecks, proceeding along in some new eccentric fashion to advertise the latest American sensation ; walk through Leicester Square at night, or, if you prefer it, make a progress into the crowded thoroughfares of the East End by day or by night ; talk about religion to people you meet in the train or at dinner ; and then ask yourself, as a result of it all, whether the world which is rejecting the Catholic Faith is, as a matter of fact, saved or lost.

The result of such a method of inquiry upon the present writer is the profound conviction that the world is, in fact, lost—lost in all kinds of ways, perishing here in the blazing fires of a consuming restlessness, a feverish sensation-hunt ; and here lost, less luridly, but not less pathetically, in the fog of utter bewilderment. On all sides I seem to hear the pathetic cry, " What must I do to be saved ? " and on

all sides the voices of the impostor and the quack, Christian scientist, crystal-gazer, and new thought leader, trading upon the common bewilderment, crying, "Lo here!" or, "Lo there!" followed by flocks of unhappy dupes—and all the while the kingdom of Heaven is in the midst—Jesus, the Lord and Saviour, God and Man, is here powerful, as of old, in His historic Church, to bring redemption and security and peace and joy to those who have faith to see and courage to draw near. For, as the lost world proves the truth of the Church's warnings, so the experience of those within the Church who have accepted and are trying to live out her ideals in their fulness, proves the truth of her promises. It is they who, not in theory, but as a fact of actual living experience, walk through life as men who are saved. They are saved, indeed, not by escape from the common difficulties and temptations of life, not as men lifted out of the world into another world, but as men who, finding themselves in the maze, hold fast the silken thread which is a safe and certain guide through all its intricacies. They are saved as men who know that there are dangers to be met, but know where they can find strength in which to meet them; who see problems in plenty waiting to be solved, but have solved the central problem of all; who, though they are not driven to the vain and childish modern expedient of meeting real evils by denying that they exist, are yet well enough aware that there is love

enough and power enough to meet all evils; whose faith issues in a combination of a zealous impatience against wrong, with a patient waiting upon the living God, Who sees what they cannot see, and does, indeed, over-rule, not only their lives, but the course of the history of the world.

For the experience of men within the Church is the same in all ages. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.¹

And for the Church, this age is, not in spite of, but because of its restlessness and unsettlement and pressing anxieties, an age of unconquerable hope. It is now, when there are signs and portents on all sides; now, when everywhere upon earth there is distress of nations with perplexity; now, when men's hearts are failing them for fear and for looking after those things that are coming on the earth; now, when these things are beginning to come to pass, that we look up and lift up our heads, as knowing that our redemption draweth nigh.² For a smooth, contented world, a world sunk in torpor and self-satisfaction, is a world impossible to save; but a world not only lost, but beginning to realize its lost state; a world groping, however blindly, after salvation, is a prodigal world

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 8.

² St. Luke xxi. 25-28.

with thoughts beginning to turn to the forgotten Father—a world which, if the Church be faithful in her task, severe and unrelenting in her moral witness, may at last be led, by the good works it beholds, to glorify God in the day of visitation.¹

For the truth is that the Catholic symbol does stand for and point to the deepest realities, and for this reason is calculated to meet man's deepest needs.

For man wants a Father, a Redeemer, and a living Guide; and a man who has found in experience a God Who is these walks through life with surer steps than he who knows no God. The Catholic Creed is indeed profoundly mysterious; its mysteries may be difficult of intellectual apprehension, but it is surely the truer symbol of reality for this fact; for, as has been recently pointed out with illuminating force, “what is clear and simple is not reality, but the conception of our own minds.”²

And, after all, in the well-known phrase, God presents Himself to us, “not as a problem to be solved, but as a Person to be loved”; and the Creed appeals not merely to the intellect—though some of the greatest intellects of all ages have found satisfaction in the intellectual study of its mysteries and the interpretation of them to the mind of their own age; but to the wider test of practical experience, the practical experience of common men and women,

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 12.

² Goudge, “Cathedral Sermons,” p. 72.

separated by widest differences in intellectual power, but all alike in this, that to all alike are given a capacity for love and a need of a God Who is Love, and can love them still, in spite of their ignorance, and folly, and blindness, with a love powerful to redeem and save.

CHAPTER XII

THE NECESSITY OF CONVERSION

SOME years ago Professor Haeckel, the distinguished scientist, was rash enough to declare that science had conducted God to the frontiers of the universe and politely bowed Him out. This monstrously arrogant assertion has since been answered with fitting irony, not by the somewhat perturbed theologians, but by the Professor's fellow-scientists, who, with practical unanimity, have repudiated his philosophy, even while they have acknowledged the greatness of his scientific achievements. But although the so-called scientific materialism is dead and done with in all truly progressive circles, practical materialism is now, as ever—perhaps, indeed, more than ever—a danger to vital religion. It is not that God is politely bowed out, it is rather that He is in danger of being crowded out. Life is so many-coloured, so full of all kinds of new excitements and new interests, that men, like children at Christmas-time, are apt to rush from gift to gift, from pleasure to pleasure, while the Giver stands by quiet and unnoticed, almost forgotten in the excite-

ment produced by His gifts. Men are so absorbed—this one in the marvels of scientific engineering ; that one in the almost equal marvels of scientific finance ; these in the attempt to make the most of the pleasures and excitements placed within their reach by the possession of abundant inherited wealth ; those in the effort to shine in the social or political world, and exploit the latest society craze or the latest political nostrum to their own personal advantage—that it is only in those hours which must come sooner or later when physical and mental ennui proclaim the bankruptcy of the soul that they turn to religion for consolation and comfort.

And then too often what they seem to look for is only a new and engrossing excitement to add to those which already so occupy their minds. It is the luxury of religion they seek, not its reality. They want God, but they want Him in the background, not as the Master and Ruler of life, but as the servant, to lend them an occasional arm when they are in danger of falling.

And to all so seeking God in the night comes the word, stern and uncompromising, because it is so profound in its tenderness, “ Except ye be born again of water and of the Spirit, ye cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

A mere interest in religion, whether curious or sentimental, is of no real value. God must reign from the central throne, or He cannot reign at all.

He, from Whom all life springs, Who is in very deed overruling the course of this world's history, whether we admit His rule or deny it, can never be a mere appendix to life.

The religion of Christ is supreme because He proclaimed in the midst of a distracted world this supreme truth.

And we, if we want to gain and to keep a vital religion, must needs seek it in no dilettante fashion, but in deadly earnest. He who ventures nothing in this supreme quest will gain nothing.

The man who seeks to combine the service of God with that of mammon will find the literal impossibility of such a combination. The first necessity, then, is that we should be honest with ourselves. Are we really asking for Christianity with the Cross left out? Do we intend, God helping us, to put God first, and order our lives on this basis? Are we going to have the courage to make what in these days is for many the supreme sacrifice, and in all cases where convention clashes with religion, let convention go to the wall?

The Church of Christ—let us frankly recognize the truth—offers us an ideal and a manner of life absolutely in conflict with the ideal and manner of life of the world; it recognizes altogether different sanctions, and is seeking other ends.

We must be honest, and we must also take pains. One of the really remarkable features of modern life

is the extraordinary amount of pains men will take over things not really worth doing.

A man who is impatient of all real effort in religion will sit up all night in order to master a "Jig-saw puzzle." This is in itself a symptom in more ways than one. For it is the temper of the age to prefer a small and sudden achievement, which can be attained by a brief effort of sustained concentration, to a really great achievement, only attainable after long effort and the cheerful acceptance of temporary defeat.

The call of Christ is to no sudden cheap achievement. The disciple, like his Master, must be content to work for results, assured indeed, but never seen, save by the eye of faith. And the disciple will be tempted, as the Master was tempted before him, to seek to win all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them by the sudden and easy method of a tolerant compromise with sin. It is the temptation of the Church, in her very anxiety to win the world, to lower her moral standard and soften down her demands, to leave out the sterner aspects of religion, while developing all that is most immediately attractive. This is one reason of her present almost helplessness. Sensuous music; ornate worship; sensational, topical sermons; a sentimental appeal to trust in a wholly vicarious crucifixion, studiously relegated to a far-off past—by such methods churches have been filled, only to be emptied again. The

Church on such terms has gained an easy acceptance at the hands of the world, only to find herself, and in the last resort to be found of all men, powerless to redeem.

Men have revolted, as so often in the past, from a religion which has left their deepest needs untouched, and so has become to them an empty and unreal thing.

We shall not reconquer their allegiance save by a fearless preaching of a religion stern in its moral demand just because the love that is its inspiration is so consuming that it cannot be satisfied with anything short of a real salvation.

Here, then, is another truth of Christ which is also a truth of experience. I am only in the way of salvation, my religion is only real and vital, just so long as I am striving—and this is where the cross comes in—to make Christ the central motive and governing principle of my life. So long as Christ is in the centre, the rest of life—its work, its necessary recreations and pleasures—fall into their proper place and cease to exercise over me that tyranny under which so many are groaning at this moment. No longer tossed hither and thither amid a whirlpool of distracting circumstances of which I am, in fact, the helpless plaything, I rule as a king over life and its changing circumstances. I live, and yet, not I, but Christ, Who liveth in me.

CHAPTER XIII

ETERNAL LIFE

THE great promise of religion, the one reward it holds out for those who will make the venture of faith and tread the way of the Cross, is the gift of eternal life. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly," says Christ.¹

"Eternal life"—what does it mean? The world seems to think of it, as I suppose we all thought when we were first taught to recite our belief in it, as a mere glorified continuance of existence for untold ages after death. It is something lying far off in the future, and between us and it, so the world remembers, lies that disagreeable experience, death, about which, even though we know we cannot escape it, we do not like to think too much. So we put away from us as something altogether unimaginable the thought of this eternal life of which our Creed tells us, keeping it, if we may, in the background of our minds, that we may have some crumb of consolation at those sad moments when we are called to stand beside the open

¹ St. John x. 10.

grave, which may mean for us, perhaps, the end of the best that this life has had to give us.

Does eternal life mean more than this to the modern man? Are there many to whom it means even so much? Yet if it meant no more, religion would be degraded to the level of a soothing drug, and would deserve to be called, what it is even now sometimes said to be, a mere illusion born of man's desire to escape from reality.

But let us ask, not what eternal life means to the world, but what it means to the Christian—what are "the words of eternal life" which kept the Apostles faithful, even though they found them so hard to understand? We may get our answer partly in one way, partly in another.

We may ponder the words of Scripture, and especially the words of Jesus, as they are reported in St. John, or we may strive to measure the life of Jesus, and see eternal life manifested in Him. "For," we may come to say with St. John, "the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father (*πρὸς τὸν πατέρα*), and was manifested unto us."

Now, when we follow this double method of arriving at the Christian doctrine, we learn first of all that the eternal life promised by Christ has no relation at all to time. It transcends time altogether. It cannot be measured by minutes and years; it has no duration. Time is a conception which belongs to another order

of existence altogether. You can no more measure eternal life by time than you can measure distance by gallons. There is a life which may be measured by duration, a life shared by man and the animals; but man, even apart from religion, has other measures of life than length of time. Primitive man, living an instinctive existence, has no conception either of time or of eternity. Even the Jews, experts in religion as they were, though they seem to have reached very near to the heart of the matter in one respect long before the day of Jesus of Nazareth, failed to arrive at the full truth, owing to their conception of death as the gateway of Sheol, conceived of as a dim and dark underworld, deep hid in the bowels of the earth. This idea had to be superseded before the full light could arrive. Hezekiah's wonderful prayer¹ shows how near and how far were the Jews of his day from the truth—near in the conception that life was the opportunity for communion with God—“the living, the living shall praise Thee”; far, in the thought of Sheol as a place where God could not be known—“The grave cannot praise Thee, death cannot celebrate Thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth.”

The later development of doctrine, through the idea of a national resurrection, figured by Ezekiel's valley of dry bones,² and the well-known passage in Isaiah,³ and Daniel's still wider conception of

¹ Isa. xxxviii. 9 *et seq.*

² Ezek. xxxvii. 1 *et seq.*

³ Isa. xxvi. 19.

a resurrection including the wicked as well as the righteous—though the thought is still confined to the chosen people only—on to the more beautiful, because more spiritual, conception of the Book of Wisdom, prepared the way for the teaching of Jesus, Who in His wonderful answer to the sceptical question of the Sadducees, with its wholly characteristic illumination of the ancient Scriptures in the phrase, “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living,” revealed the whole truth that eternal life consists in communion with God.

All the teaching of St. John’s Gospel does but emphasize this truth. Eternal life is not a life of endless continuance, but life on the highest plane—not life beyond the grave, but life that is above the reach of change and chance. It is to be gained by those who will have it on this side of the grave. He who has it is beyond the reach of mortal death, for death is but the close of that lower quality of life, which man shares with the animals. This eternal life is gained only by those who are content to forsake, or, in St. Paul’s phrase, to die to all that is incompatible with it. It is a life wholly governed from above, as the life after the flesh, life on the animal, or merely human plane, is governed from below. In a word, it is the Christ-life, over which physical death has no power. For the words of Christ are the expression, as perfect as verbal expression can be, of the life He lived. That life was a life lived wholly

from first to last "with the Father" ($\pi\rho\circs\tau\circv\pi\alpha\tau\acute{e}pa$), and for that reason was wholly ruled from above. The Gospel picture of Christ is a picture of one who lived a life of amazing consistency—"the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." The more we look into it, the more astonishing this consistency must seem. No man ever lived of a more sensitive nature than Jesus, and none ever passed through more sudden and overwhelming vicissitudes of fortune. At one moment He is the honoured guest of the rich and the idol of the poor, accepted as the hope of His nation, acclaimed as their promised deliverer and King by His chosen disciples and the multitude of common folk alike; and the next He is denied by His chief disciple, betrayed by another, forsaken by the rest, a centre of popular execration, the victim of envy, cowardice, and sudden irrational passion. Yet, through it all, the Spirit of Jesus, quiveringly sensitive, as we can only too plainly see, to every change of circumstance, every variation in the mood of those who surrounded Him, remains supreme and unconquered. Circumstances may change, other people may change. He remains the same always, never carried away by what the world calls success, never overwhelmed—even in the hour of His greatest agony—by what the world calls failure. Through all the joy, amid all the pleasures of life in which He shared so simply and so naturally; and no less through all life's stress and storm, He moves alone, reigning over all, a King indeed,

not by virtue of a people's choice, not upheld by the majesty of external pomp and power, but by virtue of a supreme unworldliness. In the world, He was not of the world: "My kingdom is not of this world; if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is My kingdom not from hence."¹

And it is precisely the life so manifested—a life wholly lived from above, lived in unbroken unity with the Father, whose will He had come to do, whose business He must ever be about, who never left Him alone even when all men forsook Him, from whom He had come into the world, to whom He returned at last, even while He was never separated from Him—it is precisely this life which is the "eternal life" to which we are called in Him. For this reason we have been baptized, that, drowned in the waters of baptism, we may die to the carnal life—the life, that is, not necessarily of fleshly lust, but centred on earth, ruled from below, and therefore, the prey of outward circumstance—to rise again to the spiritual life; the life centred in heaven, ruled from above, and therefore able to triumph over all changing circumstances, and to make all things ministrant to itself. This is the life which is first and last a life of sacrifice and communion, the motive power of which is love. Not all at once do we attain to its freedom. We begin by the learning of half-understood words and formulæ, and

¹ St. John xviii. 36.

the discipline of law and rule ; and side by side with this discipline comes, in time, the sterner discipline of life, the testing of our formulae in the fires of experience, the battle with the temptations against which we have been warned, the experience of failure and sin, and its inevitable harvest of remorse. Then we awake to penitence and the longing for the higher life of which we have heard, which, as we have come to see, alone can satisfy us. Out of the depths of a life isolated by wilfulness, the heart cries out for the Father, the soul dying in sin hungers after life. And penitence leads on—may, at least, lead on, if the heart does not harden, and sloth and contentment do not rob the spirit of its victory—to fuller light, ever deepening insight into life's inner meaning, ever widening freedom from prejudice, ever surer disentanglement of that which is permanent and essential, from the transitory guise in which it is half-hidden, half-revealed. The end is not yet, nor will be until communion with the Father is perfect.

“ Grow old along with me,
The best is yet to be,
The last of life for which the first was made.”¹

As we look out into the world about us, and gaze upon the faces of our fellow pilgrims, we see here and there the surest witness of eternal life, in some old man who keeps, as we say, the spirit of eternal youth, some man in whom St. Paul's wonderful words find a

¹ Browning, “ Rabbi ben Ezra.”

living commentary, "Though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory ; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen : for the things which are seen are temporal ; but the things which are not seen are eternal "¹

Happy is the young man who knows old men frail in body, yet alive and alert in mind and soul, still learning even in old age, still making life a progress even to the gate of the grave.

There is a time in our life, perhaps, when the poet satisfies us who sings :

" Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

" It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishment the scroll ;
I am the master of my fate :
I am the captain of my soul." ²

But there is a higher faith than this, to which we may attain, which we see in those who have penetrated more deeply into the meaning of life, and have learnt to echo the words of St. Paul : " To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain," for to die is but " to depart and be with Christ;" and " there is now no condemnation to

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 16 (R.V.).

² Henley, "A Book of Verses," p. 56.

them that are in Christ Jesus." "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" To such as these physical death is but the last of those changes and chances which are the opportunities of the spirit's victory in Christ. Already in all kinds of tribulation and anguish, in persecution and peril, they have proved "more than conquerors through Him that loved us," and with St. Paul and all the saints they are persuaded that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."¹ "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."²

"Yea, thro' life, death, thro' sorrow and thro' sinning,
Christ shall suffice me, for He hath sufficed;
Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning,
Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ."³

"This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent."⁴

¹ Rom. viii. 35 *et seq.*

² 1 John v. 4.

³ Myers, "St. Paul."

⁴ St. John xvii. 3.

BOOK III

LIFE WITHIN THE CHURCH

CHAPTER XIV

THE DISCIPLINED LIFE

HUMAN life is of various kinds and qualities. The individual has the power of choosing, within certain limits, the kind of life he will live. Not all are called to the same activities, but all who have been called into the life of the Church are called to certain kinds of activity, through which, in obedience to the living voice which is ever calling us onwards and upwards, we pass from plane to plane of spiritual experience. Within the Church we find ourselves pledged to a life which in one aspect is a life of severe self-discipline. And there are times and seasons when we are definitely called to examine ourselves to see how we stand in this matter, to make new efforts in the fellowship of the society, to attain to a fuller measure of life along this appointed path.

Thus, for example, every Lent the call comes to us to renewed effort in self-denial, in almsgiving, in

prayer. When we are first converted these things present themselves to us, probably, as three separate duties, which we feel bound to carry out in a spirit of mere obedience to an authority to which we have definitely surrendered ourselves; and doubtless to obey in such a spirit is good as far as it goes, since all self-surrender to a wider law which conflicts with private desire is good for the individual. But as we grow older in the spiritual life we find that these commands are not merely arbitrary, nor yet a series of separate commands, each admirable in itself for certain reasons. They are, rather, simply the expressions of the necessities of life of a certain quality on certain planes of existence. We may still exist without them, but we cannot exist on the plane of life to which they are proper, or pass on to higher levels. In the common life of men, apart from religion, there are similar requirements essential to life on particular planes. A man, for instance, is brought up to clothe himself in a certain way, to wash himself, to eat in a certain fashion. He is taught to conform himself to a certain standard in these and other matters, and by conforming he maintains his place on a certain level of life. He may, if he chooses, abandon the practices in which he has been trained, but if he does so he maintains with difficulty, or not at all, his position on the particular plane of living to which these practices belong. Thus, if a man gives up the practice of washing himself, he may continue to exist,

but he can hardly hope to maintain life upon the same level as before. So, too, with the spiritual life. There are different qualities of spiritual life, but the Catholic Society stands for a progressive upward striving towards the highest quality of life possible to man. And this quality of life is only attainable as a fact on certain conditions. One of these essential conditions is self-denial. The call to certain special times of self-denial is only the recognition on the part of the Church that in practice we only consecrate the whole by first learning to consecrate a part of the whole. The essential witness of the Church in this matter is to the necessity of self-denial on the part of those who would attain to life in the highest sense possible ; live with that quality of life, which we considered in our last chapter, which is bestowed in Christ—which is named eternal life because over it death has no power.

And you cannot have this kind of life unless you are prepared to surrender life on a lower plane, life of a less abundant kind. A man must make his choice. He cannot live on two planes at once.

We only live in one way, by deliberately abandoning the attempt to live in some other way. We all have to make our choice. If we choose the lower, we must needs abandon the higher. Thus the libertine necessarily renounces the possibility of the intimate joys and delicate tenderness of a pure home life. And this law of choice runs all through life. We can only enjoy

the things which make for the more abundant life by renouncing the things which make for its opposite. In Scriptural language, we die to the flesh—that is, we abandon the things which minister to a merely carnal existence—that we may live to the spirit. And in this matter the rules of the Church are merely symbolic. There is no essential virtue, for instance, in abstaining from meat and eating fish, any more than there is any essential virtue in abstaining from meat and eating a raw tomato or a nut-food. But the practice of choosing a certain prescribed fare on certain stated days has this merit, that it is a reminder of our call to sacrifice our own individual tastes and preferences at the bidding of the Society to which we belong—the Society of those pledged to a life of a quality different from that of the life of the world.

And these minor self-denials, which to those without often seem so trivial, are, of course, symbolic of one aspect of the whole life out of which they spring, much as some trivial detail in a man's dress—the fashion of his tie, the creases in his trousers—are symbolic of a character and an outlook upon life.

And the principle which underlies all true keeping of the rules of the Church—and in particular her rules as to fasting—is simply this, that we live by self-renunciation. He that would save his life must lose it.

So this renunciation is never mere renunciation for renunciation's sake, or keeping of rules for the rules' sake. There is always one end and aim in view,

which is the enlargement of life. There is, of course, a fasting which stands condemned by its fruits—a fasting which is “unto death,” not “unto life.” Life, we have already reminded ourselves, is a sum of relationships, and the perfection of life is love. Therefore, any kind of fasting which makes a man irritable, narrow-minded, hard to live with, is for him of the devil, and ministers in his case to death. Well and wisely does our Church on each Quinquagesima Sunday remind us on the threshold of Lent that “all our doings without charity are nothing worth.” Well also does she remind us as Lent begins that the whole object of our abstinence is not merely that the flesh may be subdued, but that it may be subdued to the Spirit. We are so to treat our bodies that we may be set free for the highest and widest spiritual life possible for us, and there is no danger of fasting becoming a merely formal thing for the man who constantly reminds himself of its true end. All danger of formality comes, of course, from the tendency to let the keeping of a rule become an end in itself, and not a means to this larger end, in the light of which all our rules need frequent revision.

And the duty of fasting is joined by the Church with that of almsgiving, because almsgiving, no less than fasting, is an essential aspect of the true spiritual life. Almsgiving is, in the strictest sense of the word, ■ Catholic custom, for it stands for our true relationship towards all men. We fast unto almsgiving; we

die to ourselves that we may live to others. The alms that we give by rule are symbolic, or they fail of their true use, of a life lived for the service of the brethren. It is, of course, as easy to give alms, as it is to fast, unto death, rather than unto life. The giving of alms which is a mere sop to the conscience, a mere substitute for the giving of life, is of this kind. All true almsgiving tends to the enlargement of life. It follows the twin laws of life:—growth, and reproduction. He who lives for others finds his own life growing fuller, wider, richer; reaching out to more and more satisfying relationships as his service begets service, and other lives are enlarged through the opportunities for fuller life, begotten of his self-giving. And it is well to note again, that the alms of money, which are most easily bestowed, are no more than a symbol—albeit, where they are bestowed with a wise generosity, an effectual symbol—of the true almsgiving, which is a giving of self. For, as the Gospel teaches us, it is the giving of self in love—a giving as possible to the poor as to the rich, and commoner, perhaps, among the poor than among the rich—which is the true almsgiving by which we live.

So, finally, in this trinity of duties, in which it may be truly said, “none is afore or after other, none is greater or less than another,” we come to Prayer. For prayer is but another aspect of the abundant life which both manifests itself in, and is ministered to, by this practice; even as the life of man at once

manifests itself in and is ministered to by the continuance of the act of breathing. Prayer may seem at an early period in the spiritual pilgrimage a difficult and arduous duty. To those who have abandoned the practice it must needs seem so; but it is so only as the act of breathing is a painful and difficult process to the man who is being restored to consciousness after a narrow escape from drowning.¹ To the man who is spiritually alive prayer is a natural thing. All abstract questions as to its utility leave him untouched. He prays because spiritual life naturally and inevitably issues in prayer; and by prayer he finds, as a fact of experience, that spiritual life not merely persists, but grows from strength to strength.

Prayer is the most characteristic of all Catholic customs, for by prayer the individual loses himself in the universal. He lives unto God. So, once more, the definite acts of prayer at stated times become symbolic acts. They symbolize and minister to a life which is wholly consecrated, a life which is the highest and fullest and widest possible to man just in proportion as it is consecrated, since it enters into the highest of all possible relationships, a conscious relationship with the source of all life and all love.

So it is that these notable duties imposed upon us

¹ Cf. "Banners of the Christian Faith," by the Bishop of London, p. 65.

by the Church are seen to be nothing other than the necessities of life. We can exist without them, but without them we cannot attain to the level of life to which we are called in Christ. For the life of Jesus is the Catholic life, and the Catholic life is the life of Jesus. He fasted, even to the laying down of life, and through this self-sacrifice entered into His glory. And His fasting and almsgiving were one. It was "for our sakes" that "He became poor,"¹ for our sakes that He surrendered at last life itself, making even this His alms to us, that we, receiving that gift offered at such a deliberate cost, might live. And this fasting and this almsgiving were alike the supreme prayer, offered through the eternal Spirit of love to the all-loving Father. The whole life was consecrated, the whole life was lived unto God, up to that supreme moment when it was rendered up by the last deliberate act of prayer: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit."

¹ 2 Cor. viii. 9.

CHAPTER XV

THE SACRAMENTAL LIFE

ONE reason why the Church maintains her hold upon my loyalty is this—that I am a whole-hearted believer in the Sacramental principle. A recent writer of great gifts, who has thrown real light upon the Gospels, has told us that Sacraments are foreign to the mind of Jesus, and therefore concludes that He instituted no Sacraments. The real truth is that to one who has no experience of a Sacramental Christ the mind of Jesus, in one aspect at least, remains entirely inscrutable. We see only that to which we bring the power of seeing, and none but the user of Sacraments will see the Christ Who is revealed in Sacraments.

To the present writer, at least, it would seem a truer statement to say that not in instituting special Sacraments alone, but in every word and deed, the Jesus of the Gospels was a Sacramentalist. To me, for this very reason, there is no contradiction between the Jesus of the Synoptists, the Jesus of St. Paul and St. John, and the Jesus of the historic and living

Church. Whatever the differences of their respective view-points, the various writers of the New Testament are all alike in this—that they all point me to a Sacramental Christ. All alike tell me of a Christ who looked out upon the world of nature and of man and made it sacramental. He used the world—the outward and visible world—to reveal the hidden secrets of God. By Him the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, the wind blowing where it listeth, and the waters of the river and the well, the courses of the seasons, and the very changes in the weather, were made to be sacraments of spiritual power. So, too, the common tasks of men and women became sacramental at His word; and the woman mixing bread, and the man at his work in the fields or going forth a-fishing, became for ever a source of spiritual power to those who look upon them with the eye of faith and a memory quickened by the Holy Spirit.

So again the Gospel miracles—the eyes anointed with clay, the healing touch accompanying the spoken word—are all, in the Synoptists as in St. John, though the word be his, *σημεῖα*, signs, no mere marvels to set ignorant folk a-gaping, but outward manifestations of the hidden glory of the God of power and love. It is indeed not too much to say that the real difference between the Jesus of the Synoptists and the Jesus of St. John and St. Paul is simply the difference between those who are approaching and those who have appropriated a Sacramental Jesus. To the former the

external is, as it were, still in view ; they are gazing upon it, but still gazing upon it as seeking more than appears on the surface. They approach a Christ who is still external to themselves, Whose inner meaning is still, as it were, unappropriated, though they feel dimly that in Him alone can they hope to find that for which their souls hunger. The latter, on the other hand, have gone farther. They have approached the Sacrament and appropriated it. Now it is the inner grace, the real presence, which has become their own inward, vital, experience, which now for them comes first in thought and in life, as indeed it was meant to be. For—and this is the point I want to insist upon—Jesus is indeed to all alike, Himself the great Sacrament. To those who are approaching Him for the first time from the human side His wonderful humanity is more obvious than anything else. He is the Son of Man. But His humanity is indeed wonderful just because it is indwelt of the Divine. He is “a man approved of God,”¹ “anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power.”² To those who have come to believe in Him by faith, who have accepted Him as their Saviour, and though they “have known Christ after the flesh, yet now know Him so no more,”³ who have appropriated Him, and now approach Him from the side of their own vital inward experience of Him, He is the Divine “Word made flesh,” “the sum of all things—the things that are

¹ Acts ii. 22.

² Acts x. 38.

³ 2 Cor. v. 16.

in the heavens, and the things that are on the earth." The external Christ has become "Christ in you, the hope of glory."¹

So once more for me the Bible and the Church prove their common truth in the experience of life. I read of Jesus in the Bible and approach Him from without. The story of His life, words, and works moves me to admiration, devotion, and the desire for true discipleship. I see in Him the ideal human life—man at one with God. The voice of faith within, cries out, "I believe in Jesus Christ, Son of man, and Son of God." But Bible and Church alike tell me not to be satisfied until the Christ of the external records has become the Christ of inward experience. Again the Bible and the Church alike bear witness of a Christ who is essentially at all times a Sacramental Christ, to be approached in faith from without and appropriated by faith within. The Christ of whom the Church tells me, who uses the common things of life as vehicles of the divine, is the same Christ of whom I have read in the Gospel pages.

And experience once more proves the validity of the teaching. Looking back with the eye of faith, I see that it was indeed by God's will that I was baptized into the Church of Christ, given an unmistakable Sacramental starting-point in a religious life that is Sacramental all through. I see the hand of God leading me on through the waywardness of boyhood,

¹ Col. i. 27.

giving me a new witness of His love and power at the moment when I was entering upon the real battle of life at Confirmation. It was He who brought me to Communion, and kept me fitfully faithful by mere force of habit through years when faith was almost dead. It was He who brought me through outward Sacramental means to a sense of forgiveness. It was He who consecrated me, again by outward means, to His service in the ministry of the Church. I cannot deny the reality of Sacramental grace without denying all that is best in my own experience. And yet I know that I cannot put the experience into words that will convey to another what I have felt and known. All I can do is to say, as Philip said of old, "We have found Him of Whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write"; and when I am met by the half-sceptical, yet I think half-expectant, demand, "Can any good thing come out of the Nazareth of the Church?" I can but make reply, "Come and see," sure that he who will make the venture in sincerity will arrive at last at an experience which will draw forth from him too the confession of faith.

And, indeed, I think that a Sacramental faith is becoming the only faith possible for man. Is it too much to say that modern teaching in regard to the composition of matter has not only destroyed materialism as a creed, but has gone far to remove the prejudices of Protestants against the Catholic doctrine of the Sacraments by robbing matter of that solidity

which made it seem a hard and gross thing, the very negation of the viewless, intangible spirit?

The Church has always told us that there is no opposition between matter and spirit, save for those who choose to make such opposition. For the Church, matter is made to be the servant and revealer of spirit. It is of God, who is Spirit, and yet was, and is, incarnate in man. Love rules the material, and turns it to spiritual ends.

The man who dismisses the Sacrament as "Common Bread and Plain Wine, with nothing mysterious about it," has not really learnt the lessons which scientists and theologians are alike trying to teach him from their several points of view. And, though he may be a devout man himself at other times, he has fallen from grace at the moment when he permits himself to sneer at the faith of others. For the love which can and does turn the material to spiritual ends does not know how to be superior and to sneer and to pride itself on the greatness of its spirituality. "What God hath cleansed make not thou common."

I think back over my own past, and see how the Sacrament has gained in meaning since I first drew near to the Altar in my school chapel many years ago. I had been told then that I must go to the Sacrament because I was a Christian, and Christ had said, "Do this in remembrance of Me." I was told that the outward and visible bread conveyed the inward and spiritual grace, of which it was a sign, a

means, and a pledge—a sign of food for my soul, a means by which my soul was to be fed, a pledge to “give me assurance thereof.” So I thought of it, and so I went to the Sacrament, feeling dimly that I was taking part in a rite very solemn and very mysterious. Later came the age of scepticism. What virtue could there be in taking common bread and common wine, over which a priest had said a few ancient words? I was no savage, to believe that human words could change these common things. And yet—and yet? After all, there was something there I could not explain; was it, after all, only the power of an old superstition? Why was it that I could not feel happy in abandoning the habit of going to Holy Communion? Was it simply and solely that I knew my mother would be unhappy if I gave it up altogether? Then came the stage when I went to the Altar partly because I still dimly felt that I gained something there which I needed, partly because of the witness of the friend I trusted, who testified that he had found in the Sacrament the Christ to whom the Scriptures bore witness.

There followed the day when I was content to sit at the feet of the theologians, and learn of the unanimous witness of the Church to the presence of Christ in His Sacrament, and of the inadequacy of all theories which attempted to account for the manner of that presence. And it was at this stage that I began to learn for the first time, I think, of the

Sacrament as the great bond of fellowship between believers in the great Catholic democracy of faith; when in a world where so many things sunder men from their brethren—wealth, position, power, and differences of education and aspiration—I saw this one spot where all men were brought to the level of their common need and its one universal supply, and made, in spite of all the things that make for division, one body by becoming partakers of the one bread.

Then, too, I began to see how this strangely simple act gathered up into its wonderful simplicity all the ancient sacrifices, all the imperfect and mistaken strivings of all ancient peoples and primitive religions after communion with the God Who had made them all, and so made them that they must needs “seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us.”¹

Then there came into view an aspect of the Sacrament, which must be treated more fully in another chapter, which centres round the impressive vision of the one eternal, perfect Sacrifice gathering up into itself all the sacrifices of all time, in the one age-long act centred in Calvary, where “through an eternal Spirit the Son offered Himself” to the Father in the perfection of love, which can only manifest itself in sacrifice. Then, as life went on, and I passed from the crowded cities to a land of wheat-fields and vineyards, I learnt to see how the “common bread and

¹ Acts xvii. 27.

common wine" gathered up all the labours of men and all the bounty of providence, and all the food that sustains life, and all the passion that warms it—and still the lesson was the lesson of the Son of God giving Himself to men and drawing all men unto Himself.

And still I go on learning, and every year I find that more and more is gathered up in the ancient, simple Service, new meanings offer themselves without displacing the old. So that, in the words of a recent writer, who has written most beautifully and most truly of this wonderful Sacrament: "I look around me, and am lost in wonder and thankfulness. These simple things—this bread and this wine—convey to me God and all the life of men. I am made partaker in that which saves me from absorption into self and from loss that must end in death and loneliness. The Divine Spirit is given unto me by the Body it informs. I share it with the world, and receive the world in it—the world of men made one in love.

"Love brought me this Sacrament of His Body and Blood, Love incarnate, to whom nothing was strange, from Whom nothing human or Divine could be alien, Who Himself came not to destroy but to fulfil all things in the life of man.

"*Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.'*"¹

¹ W. Scott Palmer, "A Modernist's Diary," p. 309.

CHAPTER XVI

THE LIFE OF SACRIFICE

CENTRAL in every Catholic Church, yet at the farthest point from him who is but just entering, stands the Altar. And this is truly symbolical, since Sacrifice and Communion, themselves inseparable, are at once the centre and the goal of that true religion, which is life at its highest.

The faithful Protestant, who lifts hands of horror at the mere mention of the Sacrifice of the Mass, is horrified only because he does not understand. The Catholic Church here, as elsewhere, witnesses that that which Christ did for us of old is only effective in so far as it is done in, and through, and by us now. Christ, as Law pointed out, died and rose again, only that we with Him might die and rise again. Christ ascended to the Father that we might ascend with Him to His Father and ours. Christ "through the eternal Spirit offered Himself to God," that we might learn through surrender to the same Spirit to make the same offering.

For me, all life meets at once in Christ and at the Altar, and for this very reason it is hard to put into words what the service of the Altar means to me. The secret of the soul is, after all, ultimately incom-
municable. All that one man can do is to say that here and in something after this fashion light comes to him.

And first I am sure of this, that I cannot live to myself. While I am so constituted as to long for life, for joy, for peace, for happiness, so that in one aspect all my life is a longing; nevertheless, experience teaches me that so long as I make the satisfaction of my own desires the end of life, so long I remain restless, unsatisfied, unhappy. This is the first lesson of experience in my own life. And the second is, that it is in proportion to my power of losing myself for others that happiness comes. Every child wants to be happy, and it is the experience of every child that true happiness comes in trying to give pleasure to his father or his mother, his brother or his sister, and that happiness is in proportion to the self-sacrifice involved. And, of course, that experience comes to the child, not as the result of conscious effort to get happiness for himself, but by the deliberate sacrifice, as it seems, of his own happiness to that of others. It is precisely because he has lived to others, and not to self, that happiness has come. And this is the law of sacrifice which is so central and yet so difficult of attainment that it takes all life to learn it perfectly.

“Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

We live by self-sacrifice—that is, by losing our own isolated individual lives in a larger life. All man’s truest instincts point him in this direction, and the Christian religion in this, as in all other respects, comes merely as a fulfilment and enlargement of experience. The man who has begun to live for his family rather than for himself has begun to be a Christian, though he has never heard the name of Christ. The man who sacrifices comfort and ease for the sake of his country in social or public service of any kind has gone even farther in the direction of the perfect ideal.¹ But, of course, it is in the preaching and life of Christ that the truth becomes universal, and the law of true family life and true national life widens out to become the law of the life of the world. “Whosoever would save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the Gospels shall save it,” and everyone who gives himself in service of others fulfils the law, even though he knows it not. “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.” And the Christ Who enshrined

¹ It is this truth that makes all our voluntary military training, at least, in ideal and often in practice, so good and Christian a thing, in spite of all that is urged to the contrary by the well-meaning, but mistaken, anti-militarists, whose idea of Christianity is somehow so strangely different from that of the Gospel.

this truth in word, and in His own life and death—the death which was unto life precisely because it was the fitting climax of a life which was wholly sacrifice—enshrined the same truths also in the simplest of all acts, when He took the bread, and brake, and distributed it, and poured forth and handed round the wine, and bade us do this as His memorial. For His sacred body and blood were compacted of the materials of the bread and wine of which He partook, and the bread broken and made common food, the wine poured out and shared, were, as He said—and His word made and makes all common things holy and consecrated—His body and His blood, His human Nature, given in life and death, and life out of death, for others unto God, the Father of all. And they who share in this Bread and this Cup at once pledge themselves to such a life and such a death as His, and even in pledging themselves receive power so to live and so to die. There is, indeed, in the Eucharist no act of magic, unless it be of the magic which lies behind all life, by which that which men call lightly “common bread” becomes human flesh, and human flesh becomes capable of consecration to eternal ends by the presence and power of the life-giving Spirit.

But to my way of thinking the Eucharist is a sacrifice, or it profiteth nothing. And I am quite sure that it is a sacrifice also, though he does not know it, to my devout Protestant friend who humbly draws near unable to think of that holy bread as anything

more than a mere reminder of the Lord Who died and rose again for him, and receiving it thankfully as that. It is a sacrifice for him because, in his mere act of obedience and love, and fellowship with worshippers who see so much more in the act than he sees, he is losing himself in a life larger than his own, and that is sacrifice. He may, indeed, limit the extent of his own sacrifice by his denials of the truth that he cannot see; but, at least, it is certain that, if he be a man of honest and good heart, he is entering into that eternal spirit of sacrifice by which Christ offered Himself, once for all, upon the Cross, and still offers Himself in the heavenly places in union with those whom He has made and is making one with Himself.

All things meet in the Eucharist—all the things in the heavens and the things on the earth—summed up in the Christ, without Whose real presence the Eucharist and all life would be vain. For life until it issues in offering is a mere bundle of desires, gratified perhaps, but unsatisfied; a tissue of uncorrelated acts, joys and sorrows, mere accidents and happenings—all marred by the constant failure, the haunting sense of little attempted that is worth attempting, and less achieved, and made still more vain by the recurring realization of the transitoriness of even the highest that this life, taken alone, offers. But in the Christ, Who is at once the Christ of the Gospels and of the Cross, of the Church and of the Altar, and the

Christ of all life, the whole of life is lifted into the sphere of the eternal. By self-identification with Him, those who are weary and heavy-laden find rest for their souls. In Him all the failures and imperfections, acknowledged and confessed, are found to be forgiven. In Him the strivings after the ideal, which seemed so fruitless, are found to be not really in vain. In Him every cross of failure, of sorrow, of bereavement is found to be a death unto life, so that life becomes what it was meant to be, a progress from strength to strength. In Him all innocent joy and happiness become eternal as they are offered to the Father in Whom we live and move and have our being. And all these different experiences are, as a matter of fact, wrought for the believer through the Eucharist, which, as the very abundance of the names by which it is called testifies, has so many different aspects that at one time it fulfils one purpose and at another, another for the soul.

Thus the Catholic at all the supreme moments of life seeks and finds the fulfilment of life at the Altar. When sudden temptation falls upon him it is at the Altar that he hears the Voice, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." When he is almost overwhelmed by that sudden supreme joy, which always brings to the living soul a sense of utter unworthiness, such as made Peter cry of old, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord," it is at the Eucharist that he hears the Voice

which bids him, "fear not," and assures him that this joy is given him not for himself alone, but as a preparation for a life of wider service. Again, when life takes on the appearance of failure and everything seems empty, he flees to the Altar to find the reality which lies behind all appearances. And if you ask why there is need for an Altar set up in a public place—why a man cannot as well erect a spiritual Altar in the shrine of his own heart, or find a like solace on his knees in the privacy of his own house—I answer that the public Altar witnesses to the fact that a merely individual sacrifice is an impossibility. The Christ Who lives and dies unto the Father, lives and dies on behalf of those whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren, and the act by which our individual joys and sorrows, successes and failures, are consecrated must be an act which links us not only to God but to our fellows, so that our joys are united to theirs and our sorrows made fruitful for them.

But it may be said, if this is true, if the sacrifice of the Church is really so natural and so satisfying a thing, why is it that so few enter into it, so many—yes, and so many of honest and good heart—stay away?

These are questions which ought to be faced, even though they be more easily asked than answered. And first I would answer, that I am only really concerned by the abstention of the men of good-will. The others—the selfish, the mere pleasure-seekers or mammon-

worshippers—cannot see, much less can they enter into the kingdom of God, until they have realized the futility of the attempt to satisfy their own deepest needs in the life they have chosen. Sooner or later they will find themselves forced to face the realities of life and death . . . and when that moment comes they will have their great opportunity. Meanwhile, since they are wedded to its alternative, the appeal to self-sacrifice cannot touch them.

It is the others—the men of honest and good heart, the men whose lives are often so full of noble self-sacrifice, who yet never draw near to the Altar—who form for me the problem which calls for an honest attempt at an answer.

And I think that answers—for there are more than one—are not really far to seek. First, I think there are many who are kept away because they are so alive to the danger of unreality in religion. How many there are who have never learnt what is certainly a truth of the Gospel, that one must live dangerously if one would live at all!

The danger, alas! is only too obvious; it is as old as Christianity, as old as life. We cannot possibly be too much aware of it. But it is the very man who is aware of it who ought not to fear it. The man who feels deeply the danger of a permitted divorce between the ideal and the actual, between profession and practice, is the man who is least likely to be guilty of that divorce. He is also the man who needs to be aware

of the other danger of setting aside the ideal as too difficult of attainment, and excusing himself from the struggle after the ideal by the excuse, which is, after all, the excuse of the coward, that at least he does not make any profession.

But let us be quite honest, and acknowledge that there is a way of preaching and a way of believing in the sacrifice of the Altar which are the very negation of the right way, just as there is a way of preaching and a way of believing in the Cross which are unto death, and not unto life.

Belief in the Mass and belief in the Cross may alike be preached and accepted, as we know only too well, as a substitute for, rather than a dedication to, a life of sacrifice and service. And where this is so the result cannot be otherwise than disastrous. Every possible theory of substitutionary sacrifice, whether it be a theory of the Atonement or a theory of the Mass, is akin to the religious theory of the savage whose real hope is to keep his God out of his life, and thinks that he may do this by the propitiatory offering of a bull or of the body of his enemy. Can it be denied that there is a kind of sacrifice preached even in Christian and Catholic Churches which does not win really earnest men because their conscience tells them it is false? Sometimes, to take one instance, men are exhorted in sermons or manuals of instruction to make a sacrifice of their reason by accepting blindly, as it were, the whole Catholic Faith, by which is

sometimes meant the whole medieval system which is too often taken as equivalent to true Catholicism. Such a sacrifice is held to carry with it the repudiation of all Higher Criticism and the abandonment of the attempt to find a rational faith. What wonder that such an appeal, only too acceptable to those whose one aim in life is to escape from the pain and trouble which thought brings, seems immoral to those who believe that God has given them their mental powers for use to their fullest extent, and that only by such use of them can the truth be found. Surely it is time to proclaim from the housetops that the only sacrifice of the reason that God demands is the sacrifice of a reason consecrated to His service and the service of others—that even the heresy born of an honest attempt to present Christ rationally to the minds of men is better than the apparent orthodoxy which does not satisfy those mental needs which are themselves of God.

The sacrifice which is seen in the Christ of the Gospels is the sacrifice of the will, the consecration of the whole of life, and of all material things which enter into life in this world, the devotion of every power and talent to the service of God and man; and this is the true sacrifice of the Church, the kind of sacrifice to which alone she can rightly summon her children, the sacrifice which is shown forth on her Altars in the consecration of common typical things to become the means of bestowing blessings meant

for all. And the man of honest and good heart, the man who is trying to do his plain duty, who is losing himself in some degree for others, should surely pass on quite naturally—would, indeed, feel that he must logically pass on—to the Altar and make that the true centre of his life, had we who have found it the centre of ours but the insight so to present it to him as to show him that it is meant to be, and is capable of being made at once the fulfilment and the enlargement of the life which he already feels to be the only life worth living.

CHAPTER XVII

THE MISSIONARY LIFE

MISSIONARY enthusiasm is of the very essence of the Christian religion. You may possibly be an enlightened and respectable Unitarian, a Deist or even a Theist, without being a missionary. You cannot continue to be a Catholic Christian without being a missionary. For the law of the Christian life is this, that you live not for self but for others; you find your own salvation only in seeking to save others; he that would save his own life can do it only as he loses it in the effort to bring life to others. If it be true, as it surely is true, that the men who will venture nothing can never enter into the glory of the Christian life, so it is true that, having entered in, he will soon lose the glory unless he passes it on to others. If the light has come to him, he must needs himself arise and shine. If it be true that you begin to enter into a vital religion by burning your boats behind you, it is equally true that your religion only remains vital so long as you are busy building other boats to carry the religion that has become

yours to the uttermost parts of the earth. And the moment you study the Bible with open eyes you see that of course it must be so. Our Blessed Lord came as a missionary, lived as a missionary, was crucified because He was a missionary, and called His disciples to forsake all and follow Him that He might train them to become Apostles—that is, missionaries. Broadly speaking, our Lord looked out upon the world, its sorrows, its needs, in the light of that central fact which illuminated His own individual life. First, He Himself lived in the presence of the Father—the Father Who was at once His Father, and the Father of all men upon earth. To Him to live was to know the Father.

And over against this vision—a vision, which brought to Him perfect joy and peace—He saw the nations of the earth who knew not the Father. He saw all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them—all in the power of Satan—all lost because they knew not the Father, nor knew the way to find Him. It was not for nothing, as many writers have delighted to point out, that Jesus spent so many years in Nazareth—in “Galilee of the nations.” “On the great roads north and south of the town’s girdle of hills passed to and fro, on the journey between Egypt and Mesopotamia the many-coloured traffic of the East—moving no faster than the camel cared to go, swinging disdainfully on, with contempt on its curled lip for mankind, its work, and itself. Traders, pilgrims, and princes—

the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them—all within reach and in no great hurry, a panorama of life for a thoughtful and imaginative boy.”¹

From early years He looked into the faces of many men of many nations, and read therein the sad truth that they had not found, as He had found it, the secret of life in the knowledge of the love of the Father. Nor was this all. Central among all the nations He saw His own nation—magnificent in heritage, magnificent in promise, magnificent in opportunity. From those same hills round Nazareth He looked out upon all the most famous scenes of His nation’s history—every one of them telling to those who knew the Scriptures the story of the Father’s care for and patience with the people of His special choice—the people chosen, as He saw so clearly, not for its own sake, but for the world’s sake, that in the fulness of time it should become “a light to the Gentiles” and “salvation unto the end of the earth.”

This was the Father’s will, and He was sent by the Father to be the Light of the world; His meat was to do the Father’s will, and the Father’s will was that from the Jews salvation was to spread over the whole earth.

So He was first and last a Missionary—and He was crucified because the leaders of His own nation had substituted for the missionary spirit a spirit of con-

¹ Glover, “The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire,” p. 120.

tempt not merely for the other nations, but for the poor and lowly of their own nation. For the true patriotism which sees that a nation's real greatness consists in the service which it renders to the world, they had substituted that narrow and bastard patriotism which manifests itself only in an unwarranted contempt for foreigners.

So, from every high and true motive, our Lord was a Missionary—a Missionary to His own people, that He might make them realize their missionary vocation to the whole world. For this He lived, for this He worked, for this He was crucified. And it followed necessarily, inevitably, that all who heard His voice and accepted His leadership became missionaries themselves. “As the Father hath sent Me, so send I you.” And they were to begin as He had begun, first in their own country—Jerusalem, Judæa, Samaria—and not to rest till they had brought salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth. In these days, not infrequently, though less frequently, perhaps, than used to be the case, you may hear men saying that they do not believe in missions. Our religion, they say, may be all very well for us, but why should we interfere with other nations? While there are so many heathen at home, why should we go abroad? Now there are many answers to such questions. Obviously, for instance, the Christian faith would never have spread beyond Palestine had the earliest Christians held these opinions; but the real answer

of the Christian is surely this: "I am a missionary because I cannot help myself. I may have begun to take part in missionary work in the first place because I was told it was my duty to do so, but now I do so because I live by doing it. The love of Christ constraineth me. I have seen a vision of the Father, a vision of His Son, and in the light of that vision I have seen the world all gone wrong because it knows neither the Father nor Jesus Christ, Whom He has sent. How can I be silent? I must go where God calls me in my own person; I must realize somehow or other my unity in the body of Christ with those whose missionary work carries them to the far-off nations of the earth—that is why I read missionary literature, go to missionary meetings, pray for missions and subscribe to missionary societies."

For the truth is that, indescribably wonderful as it seems, Jesus of Nazareth has made me one with Himself, and the more I realize my union with Him the more I look up to the Father, and out upon the world with His eyes. In Him I see that the Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men, and giveth them to whomsoever He will. And since it is His will that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, it is plain that my own nation has been raised to its position of magnificent privilege and unique opportunity among the nations of the earth, not that Englishmen may look out upon the world with envy, hatred, and contempt of the foreigner, but that through

us the nations may be saved. I can no more help being a missionary than Paul could. I long to be able to cry with him, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

When politicians tell me that our safety depends upon the number of our Dreadnoughts and the building of effective barriers against other nations, I can only answer that it may still be unhappily necessary to go on building Dreadnoughts—of that I am no judge—but one thing I know, that our true safety depends not upon the number of our Dreadnoughts, but upon the fulfilment of our mission to the world. If we are content to erect barriers against other nations and neglect the mission which is laid upon us, we shall find, when it is too late, that we cannot build barriers against God.

Unhappily, it is only too plain that our danger at this moment is precisely that of the Jews of old—the danger of missing our opportunity because we are content to rest upon privilege to the neglect of responsibility. God's purposes cannot fail. It was His purpose of old that the world should be saved through the Jews, and through the Jews it was saved—but while salvation went forth from Jerusalem, Jerusalem herself perished because she knew not the day of her visitation. And so, surely, it will be to-day. God has given us a mission to the nations, and His purpose cannot fail of its fulfilment. Through us the poor shall have the Gospel preached to them—the

poor of our own nation and those who are poor because they know not the unsearchable riches of Christ; but it may be—God grant that it be not—that the Saviour even now weeps over us, as He wept over Jerusalem of old, because we know not the things which belong unto our peace.

CHAPTER XVIII

RETREATS

“There is a time to keep silence.”—ECCLES. iii. 7.

“To everything there is a season,” says the Preacher, “and a time to every purpose under the heaven”¹; but it is noticeable that among the many things to which he allots a time there is no mention made of religion, and it is probable that a like omission from the conventions of modern social life is largely responsible for the widespread acceptance of the same Preacher’s pessimistic philosophy as a summary of life: “Vanity of vanities,” saith the Preacher, “all is vanity.” At least, it is certain that the experience of men in all ages goes to prove that times of quiet meditation and devotion are necessary to a true knowledge of God. “Be still, and know that I am God,” is the inspired expression of an essential religious law.

Never, surely, was the recognition of this fact more urgently needed than at the present day, when, for multitudes of men, quiet and stillness seem to have

¹ Eccles. iii. 1-8.

vanished for ever from life. It is, indeed, no matter for wonder that religion has decayed of late. Among the causes of that decay there can be no doubt that the absence of real leisure from the lives of men is not the least potent. Those, on the one hand, whose daily occupation involves long hours of arduous work in conditions usually unpleasant and frequently unhealthy, who have been taught no high ideals of the dignity of labour, and have never learnt to look upon their work as capable of being transformed into an act of real religious significance, too often have no thought in their scanty leisure hours beyond that of getting as much rest and enjoyment as they may in the easiest possible way. It is, indeed, supremely natural that this should be so. In countless cases the struggle for a bare existence is so fierce and makes such demands upon the workers that the real marvel is not that so little, but that so much religion survives among them. It is, indeed, true to say that the survival of any religion at all under modern conditions among the masses of our industrial folk in the great cities is in itself a sufficient proof of the inherently religious nature of man.

On the other hand there exist large numbers of men for whom the real hindrance to faith is not that they have too much, but that they have too little work. A man who has no serious occupation in life cannot possibly attain to a vital religion. The world, for the present at any rate, may tolerate mere idlers

and pleasure-seekers, but it is certain that there is no room for them in the kingdom of Heaven.

Perhaps it is the recognition of these self-evident facts which drives so many earnest men to the conclusion that a social revolution is really needed in the interests of true religion. Whether this conclusion is right or not remains to be seen, but, at least, it is not held without reason. I do not propose, however, to embark upon the discussion of so vast and difficult a topic as this. It is enough to say that faith in a living God, Who is overruling the world and shaping the course of history, will save a man from the haunting and paralyzing fear of what the future may bring forth which seems to possess so many, even of our most prominent men. The man of faith may, indeed, hope and pray for his country that she may be spared one of those dreadful cataclysms which seem to mark God's historical judgments upon the toleration by the nations of immoral social conditions. He must needs fear for her future if he sees righteousness and truth, and justice and mercy set on one side; he must needs fear no less for his Church if he sees her losing faith in a living God, and ceasing to be a witness to the nation of the ideals, for the maintenance of which He has created her. But knowing that that which is true and good is immortal and indestructible, and discerning the working of the Spirit of God in all the great movements of life, he will still face the future calmly.

But leaving these large questions on one side, we may confidently assert that no man can possibly attain to a large and vital faith whose life, for whatever reason, contains no leisure for quiet thought and devotion. The great joy and blessedness of communion with God and rest in Him is only for those who consecrate spaces of time to this end.

The Gospel narrative gives us glimpses of the quiet times of communion with the Father in which our Lord Himself sought strength for the active ministry of life, and tells us also of His invitation to the weary disciples to come apart into a desert place and rest awhile with Him. We need such quiet times, and need them more and more in the increasing roar and bustle of modern days. But easy as it is to recognize this need, it is often exceedingly difficult to supply it. The restlessness of the world has too often invaded, even where it has not destroyed, the private sanctuaries of home life. Many men find it almost impossible, even in their own homes, to get time for real quiet and meditation. So it is to meet this need that the Church is setting herself to organize special times of quiet for those who desire them—times of silent waiting upon God, of longer duration than those all too brief moments which the devout seeker after God learns to value so greatly, Sunday by Sunday, in the Communion Service.

The reader may possibly have seen a remarkable article called "In Retreat" which appeared in the

Spectator a year or two ago. The writer of this article was a Roman Catholic Priest, and he described how his own branch of the Church had organized retreats for working men first in Belgium and then in England, and the astonishing success which had attended this experiment. He could tell of nearly 10,000 working men being found willing to attend such retreats in the course of one year. To that article the Editor of the *Spectator* appended a note suggesting that a similar experiment might well be tried by others besides Roman Catholics, and, indeed, in our own branch of the Catholic Church, the experiment has been tried, not perhaps on so large a scale, but still with sufficient appreciation on the part of those for whom it was intended, to more than justify the making of it.

But of course it is not only—perhaps not chiefly—working men, in the narrower use of the term, who need and can appreciate a retreat. Experience has already proved that many men in all classes of life are ready to welcome and use such an opportunity as a retreat gives for quiet meditation upon the meaning of religion, and for a real attempt to get, possibly for the first time, below the surface of things.

For the sake of those who are not familiar with the method of retreat it may be worth while to sketch in outline exactly what a retreat is. First as to duration. The time set apart for a retreat includes at least one complete day, the retreat beginning upon the evening of one day and continuing until the early

morning of the third day. But nearly everyone who has tried the experiment would agree that a retreat which covers three complete days is much more helpful than a shorter one. The contrast between the rush of life in the world and the quiet of life in retreat is so great that many men find that it takes nearly the whole of the first day to become accustomed to the change. It is common in retreat to have a rule of silence which may or may not be relaxed during certain hours of the day. Each day begins with a celebration of Holy Communion, and there are short services at intervals throughout the day. During meals there are readings from the Bible and suitable books. At some of the services, perhaps three times a day in all, addresses are given by the conductor of the retreat; but listening to addresses is not the object of the retreat, and most retreatants will find that the real value is not dependent upon the addresses given. It should be said that, though some short retreats are held in London, it is far better to go into retreat, if possible, in some quiet country place.¹ In this case the surroundings will help to make the retreat a time of real communion with God, and part—and that not always the least helpful part—of the time will be spent out-of-doors.

¹ A retreat house has recently been started in connection with Liddon House, at a suitable place in the country. At this house frequent retreats are held for laymen. Those desiring to obtain particulars concerning the work of Liddon House and these retreats should write to the Chaplain, 15, Thurloe Square, S.W.

It is not hard to see what an opportunity such a time as this gives to the man whose days are filled with work, which perhaps makes great demands upon his physical and mental energies, and social duties, which are hardly less exhausting than his work, to take stock of his life and ask himself what are the things worth doing and how far he is attempting to do them, what effect his manner of life is having upon his character, what hold the ideals of the Gospel have upon him, whether life is for him in any sense a progress "from strength to strength," whether his life is really governed from within, or whether he is becoming a mere slave of circumstance and convention. For most men a retreat is thus a time not only for silence, but also for self-examination, for penitence and for renewed effort after Communion. They go to it weary and heavy-laden; they return strengthened and refreshed, resolved to strive more earnestly and perseveringly to consecrate life and all its opportunities to the service of God and their fellows.

BOOK IV

SOME PROBLEMS OF THE HOUR

CHAPTER XIX

THE LONGING FOR PEACE

THERE is deep in my inmost being, implanted there as I needs must believe by God Himself, a longing for peace and rest. This longing is intensified by the rush and whirl and roar of modern life. With the poet we are tempted to feel and say

“ . . . that repose has fled
For ever the course of the river of Time.
That cities will crowd to its edge
In a blacker incessanter line;
That the din will be more on its banks,
Denser the trade on its stream,
Flatter the plain where it flows,
Fiercer the sun overhead.
That never will those on its breast
See an ennobling sight,
Drink of the feeling of quiet again.”¹

But this very sense of rush and whirl and roar, which seems, for the moment in many quarters, to be

¹ Matthew Arnold, “The Future.”

drawing men away from Christ, must in the end, I believe, drive them to Him. Sooner or later we must find that Christ is our peace. But while I am profoundly convinced that this is true, while I am sure that true peace is waiting here and now for every storm-tossed and world-weary soul, I seem to see on every side of me, men in their longing for peace, accepting a peace that is not His, though it is offered and accepted in His name. It is always in the hour of doubt and weariness that the false Christs arise and deceive many. Men grown weary of war are but too easily tempted to accept peace at any price, and a false peace is ever more easily gained than the true.

My aim, therefore, in the present chapter, is to set forth as clearly as I may, what seems to me to be the only road to the attainment of true peace, that "peace of God which passeth all understanding," for which we were made, into which we may, I do indeed believe, enter here and now in Christ.

But the conviction which is burnt into my soul alike by the experience of life and the teaching of the Gospel, as I understand it, is this: that true peace can never be attained by the abandonment of struggle. The way of life is a way of struggle. The peace which is born of cessation from struggle is the peace of unconsciousness, which must pass if we are not aroused from it, into the peace of death. This, I say, seems to me alike the teaching of the Gospel and of life. Christ does, indeed, promise us rest if we are

weary and heavy-laden, but it is the rest which comes from the acceptance, not the abandonment, of the Cross. Every invitation which comes to us to lay down a cross is of the devil and not of Christ. Such invitations are perpetually offered to us, and the more weary we are of doubt and uncertainty, of difficulty and perplexity, the more subtle will their temptation be. The Voice that calls us to rest is so like the Voice of Christ as we remember it, perhaps, of old !

Herein, as it seems to me, lies the chief force of the appeal to us to surrender ourselves to a purely external authority in religion, an appeal which is always backed by an exhortation to humility, as false, surely, as the promised peace. Abandon the doubts and perplexities into which the Higher Criticism must plunge you, and accept the Bible only as the pure Word of God, final and authoritative, and so shall you find peace, say some. Abandon the false pride of private judgment, and accept the infallible authority of the visible head of the Church on earth, and the Bible on that authority, say others. And both alike "deceive many." Yet both alike are failing visibly before our eyes, because just in so far as the peace they offer is a false peace it does not and cannot satisfy men who are made for the true peace of God. And the moment we reach this decision other voices are heard, applauding our progressive spirit and bidding us to follow our conviction to its logical conclusion and seek peace by abandoning the traditional religions, as mere effete

survivals of an older day, and accepting the latest product of modernity as the Gospel of the Age, which must be true because it is new. But such a plea proclaims its own preposterousness. Again, the ancient Gospel and the experience of life are wholly at one in teaching us that what is wholly new cannot possibly be true. New truth has ever an organic connection with the old. Religion, social as well as individual, needs to be born again. But the new is born out of the womb of the old, it does not come into being out of nothingness. It must even proclaim its legitimacy by its family likeness. The Christ Who comes to bring peace, comes, not as a mere iconoclast and not as a mere innovator, but with this word ever on His lips: "Think not I am come to destroy . . . I am come not to destroy, but to fulfil."¹ So the true peace cannot be found by this complete abandonment of the old in favour of that which is merely new, any more than it can come from the mere clinging to tradition and the refusal of that which is new just because it is new.

How, then, are we to find the promised peace of Christ?

First by the humble acceptance of struggle, the facing of doubt and perplexity, the refusal of short cuts and merely slothful surrenders. "In your endurance ye shall win your souls."²

The moment we accept doubt and perplexity as

¹ St. Matt. v. 17.

² St. Luke xxi. 19 (R.V.).

themselves of God, as part of the Cross we are called to bear, we have passed beyond them to faith and peace. The true peace comes from the resolute refusal to close our minds.

There is no secure and lasting peace for the man who is ever ready to pass hasty judgment, whether upon that which seems at first sight to be mere tradition, or upon that which seems at first sight to conflict with tradition. A living faith sees God's overruling hand equally in the past and in the present. It is prepared to face what must ever be the anxious and difficult task of disentangling that which is eternal from that which is temporary. All short cuts to peace come from the denial of God's working either in the past or in the present. The man who prides himself upon being up-to-date will inevitably fail to recognize God's hand in the survival of the traditional. The man who rests upon tradition will fail to recognize its fulfilment in that which is its true development. To hold the balance between the claims of past and present; to be content to hold judgment in suspense while waiting for fuller light; to go on worshipping in old ways when the sudden and really untested doubt seems to have emptied them of meaning; to attempt to enter into the mind of the man who seems to be preaching some wholly new doctrine before passing judgment upon him—all these things are difficult. It is so much easier to take up a settled position and refuse to leave it; to rely upon and hasten to repeat the

judgment of the first critic who denounces that which conflicts with what we have always held; to sink back upon the old, even when the old, for all the truth it once enshrined, has ceased to satisfy the growing needs of the soul; or, on the other hand, to accept the new simply because it is announced with a flourish of trumpets as the latest product of progressive thought.

The true peace—such is the strange paradox that proved itself true beyond all dispute in Palestine nineteen centuries ago—is only for those whose whole religious ideal is social, who are not ashamed to call all men their brethren, but are yet compelled to walk along what seems at first an absolutely lonely path, abandoning all human support, stedfastly refusing to shout the party war-cries, and repeat the party shibboleths and therefore misunderstood by all, an object of the ridicule and contempt of each party in turn. “Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace but a sword. For I come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law: a man’s foes shall be those of his own household. . . .”¹

Until we have first learnt the meaning of those words we shall never arrive at the meaning of those others, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you: let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”²

¹ St. Matt. x. 35.

² St. John xiv. 27.

The whole appeal of the present age, with its emphasis upon the value of money, its ideal of escape from discomfort and pain, is to deny the Cross even in the name of religion. Its prophets are for ever preaching smooth things, crying peace, peace, when there is no peace.

Here one cries that men have only to believe that they have no burdens, and they will find that they have none. Here another promises relief to all who will make complete submission to an authority which has made a non-moral obedience to itself, a cheap and easy substitute for the way of the Cross. Here, again, is another crying to you to throw reason overboard and accept the written word as wholly inspired and so find peace. But through the din of rival voices, there is one Voice which speaks not to the ear, but direct to the heart, a Voice which says: "Take up thy Cross and follow Me . . . I am the Way, the Truth and the Life . . . Ye believe in God, believe also in Me . . . Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, whosoever will lose his life for My sake and the Gospel's shall find it."

For those who hear that Voice life cannot be other than a progress against odds, a battle with continual temptation, the struggle towards a goal which seems far off, a resolute refusal of all those easy compromises by which the devil gives men, as far as he can give them, the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them. They will have to renounce ease and fame, the prizes of the world, the support of a party, the

applause of the mob, even though all be offered them in turn ; they will have to bear not only the contemptuous rejection of all to whose prejudices they run counter, but, what is far harder, the ready patronage of those who completely misunderstand their aim and their message.

In the world they will have tribulation incessant, ever arising in new forms. But beneath the troubled surface of life, beyond the reach of change and chance, will lie for them the inexhaustible depths of that true peace which the world did not give and the world cannot take away. And this true peace is distinguished from false peace in this—that it is never the result of an escape from evil. In the hour of tribulation the best of the world's comforters will tell you to be patient, for the hour will pass, time will heal the wounds, you will get back, if not to that former joy of which your troubles have robbed you, yet to a chastened peace which comes from escape and release. How different is the Voice of the true Prince of Peace! “Not as the world giveth give I unto you.” The peace of Christ comes from knowing that “*all things* work together for good to them that love God.” The pains and sorrows of life are not things to be borne in fortitude because they are temporary ; they themselves are good because they are the very means by which our life is made a progress. The sorrow is not taken away, *superseded by* joy, but *turned into* joy, which is a very different

thing. "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but when she is delivered, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world."¹

Such is the true peace of Christ—the peace of faith, the peace of trust, the peace that is so wholly independent of this world, that he who has it can look forward calmly to what appears the uttermost disaster: "Behold the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.

"These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."²

¹ St. John xvi. 21.

² *Ibid.*, xvi. 33.

CHAPTER XX

ANCIENT CEREMONIES AND MODERN LIFE

“Who would keep an ancient form
Thro’ which the Spirit breathes no more?”

TENNYSON.

EARLY this morning as I stood at the Altar of my little village church reciting the ancient Liturgy, an aeroplane came booming out of the west, and passed over the very church itself, and I could hear, outside the almost empty building, the excited cries of the villagers seeing for the first time this modern marvel. The incident seemed to bring to a head thoughts which had been occupying my mind while I was pondering over the subjects with which this chapter deals. For there, on the one hand, was I, engaged in that ancient service which has come down to us through the ages, and has gathered up into itself the ideas of sacrifice and communion which have underlain all the worship of men from the remotest times —since man first began to seek the fellowship with the Eternal Who made him. And there on the other hand—all unconscious of the priest who prayed for

him as he flew past—was one of those who seem, in the newness of their triumph, to be wholly separated from the ancient and traditional, men of the present and the future, glorying in the latest and most wonderful of the triumphs of scientific skill and human daring.

Are priest and altar and formal service—this was the question that framed itself in my mind—mere survivals of antiquity, altogether out of touch with modern life and modern thought?

To that question many—perhaps amongst the number my unknown friend from across the Channel, who made it so hard for me to concentrate my thoughts on the Divine Service this morning—would answer “Yes.” Only the other day I was reading a passage in a somewhat pretentious little book by an American Professor to the effect that humanity had outgrown all forms in religion, and that the religion of the future would be a purely individualistic and informal affair, devoid of all outward ceremony, with no felt obligation to social worship of any kind.

And there is much to give colour to such a prophecy. Statistics of attendance at places of worship reveal how far men have drifted from the customs of their ancestors in this respect. And statistics, even while they show how small a percentage of men are regular attendants at any place of worship, do not show how many or few of those who still attend are really

satisfied with the forms of worship provided for them, or how many attend for reasons other than that of a desire to join in an act of worship which is a true expression of spiritual aspiration.

Many, no doubt, there are who are still to be found in church rather because they feel vaguely that their conscience would reproach them if they stayed away, than from any consciousness that the ceremonies in which they take part lead to the satisfaction of a soul-hunger. Possibly among men the memory of a pious mother or the influence of a devoted wife often counts for more than the attraction of the service itself.

On the other hand, it is probably true to say that of those who stay away many, perhaps the majority, are influenced only by the thought that there is a contrast between the ideals of Christ's religion and the realities—the sometimes sordid realities—of their personal and business life; and many others are absent from mere slackness, or possibly dislike of a particular parson, or failure to understand a type of service different from that to which they have grown accustomed in school and college days. Comparatively few have arrived at any positive conviction on the subject.

It is indeed the most natural thing in the world for the young man who has outgrown the stage when religion is more or less taken for granted, and attendance at a place of worship is a regulation of his

school or of his college authorities, to jump to the conclusion that forms and ceremonies of venerable antiquity are out of date and had better be discarded altogether, or at least replaced as speedily as possible by something more suitable to the times in which we live—just as a prominent Nonconformist minister has recently suggested that the historic ceremony of the Royal Coronation in Westminster Abbey ought to be replaced in this democratic age by a Coronation, to the accompaniment of Nonconformist hymns, in Trafalgar Square.

The more in earnest a man is about life, the more interested he is in modern social, scientific, and philosophic problems, the more likely he is to feel that the Prayer-Book services are out of touch with the realities of twentieth-century life, and possibly to assent to the conclusion of the American Professor referred to just now.

But it does not follow that a conclusion is necessarily the right one because there is much to be said for it off-hand. It is well to remember that such venerable forms can only have survived the changes of so many centuries in virtue of the fact that they have been found capable of expressing the real needs of the soul. And indeed it is sufficiently plain that there are still many whose religious needs are satisfied, and whose lives are ennobled, by their participation in these ancient ceremonies. None but a hardened cynic can fail to see that there are even now many

who carry away from their devotions in church a spirit of devotion which animates and consecrates all their lives.

Beneath all that is archaic in form there is a spirit, for which the form, however inadequate, still stands symbol, which, after all the centuries, is still the highest known to man. There are some ancient things which, for all the march of time, for all the triumphs of modern discovery, remain unchanged and unchangeable—things in which every man has, or may have, his part, whatever his intellectual or manual equipment. The spirit of love, the spirit of self-sacrifice, the desire for and the realization of communion with the Father of Spirits, and fellowship with others in that communion—these things are of no age, or, if you prefer it, of all ages. It is these aspirations of the individual after a larger life, these things which are so deeply rooted in human nature that there is probably no single soul who does not realize them at some times, if only for passing moments, which underlie and express themselves through the ancient ceremonies of the Church.

The reason why men do not at present enter into these ceremonies is surely to be sought less in the fact that they have changed their old ideals and lost their old needs with the march of time, than in the very evident fact that the conditions of modern life, the social contrasts and inequalities which are becoming ever more and more intolerable, have pro-

duced a state of things so inhuman as to make a true human life impossible for vast numbers of our people and supremely difficult for others.

Men still need religion, and they still need a social religion, and therefore they still need a religion which attempts to express itself in outward and visible forms. While the spirit's only possibility of self-expression lies, as it manifestly does, in the outward and visible, man will never be really satisfied by a religion which, claiming to be purely spiritual, attempts in vain to dispense with the outward. Some forms, however simple, are necessary, and while they are surely wrong who seek to impose a rigid uniformity of outward symbol upon all men alike, experience and reason both seem to show that, among outward forms, those are most likely to survive which have been found over the widest area and for the longest time to satisfy the needs of men. It may be necessary, no doubt it is necessary, to revise and modify forms and ceremonies from time to time; but that that need is less urgent than is sometimes thought must be evident to those who realize the truth that external religion is, for the most part, an attempt to express that which does not change.

Probably at almost any time and in almost any ceremony there are some accretions which might well be lopped off, and some mere survivals from an age when ideas that were true were hopelessly entangled with others that were false; but for all that, the real

need at any moment will probably be for enrichment and enlargement, to meet growing needs by the consecration of new fields of life, rather than for the mere abolition of that which is old and substitution for it of that which is new.

Whether revision of the Prayer-Book is necessary at the present moment or not is a matter with which the present book has no concern. What has been said above may or may not have a bearing upon that burning question ; but the point that I would make here is that the vague feeling which many men have that the worship of the Church is out of date has less justification than they are apt to imagine. If there is, and I think there is, a capacity in every man for devotion, love, and self-sacrifice to, and fellowship with the Unseen Father of Spirits, if in this as in all else man is made to enter into fellowship with his brother-men, there is plainly a place in life for common worship, and common worship implies common forms, and common forms plainly cannot—and since they stand very largely for unchanging things need not—be constantly changed themselves. All that the individual needs is to put into those forms all that they are capable of expressing. The man who honestly tries to do this will be astonished, over and over again, to find how naturally and readily the aspirations of the moment link themselves on to, and express themselves through, the ancient words. Indeed, I am bold to maintain that the Liturgy of the

English Church, whatever its imperfections—and that it is imperfect, as every liturgy is necessarily imperfect, no one need deny—does really express, in language with which no modern devotional writing can compare, the deepest aspirations of the human soul, and lends itself to the consecration of all human interests, however modern they may be.

I conclude, then, that the priest and the Altar and the ancient ceremonial, and the fellowship of believers which gathers round them, are not less but more needed in these modern days of aeroplanes. Just in proportion as the surface of life widens and men specialize more and more upon some fragment of it, just in proportion as the temporal and transitory become more absorbing in their interest and excitement, the need of those whose business it is to generalize and to unify, to join all present interests into one, and to link all the present with the past by service and sacrament which gather up into themselves all that is good and true and permanent in every age and offer all to God, becomes greater than ever.

The aeroplane roars its way into and out of the circle of worship and praise, but the human soul of its pilot needs more than his wonderful mechanism, and more than the intoxication of his new triumph, can give him. The man may, for all I know, look down in more senses than one upon the church over which he sails with such wonderful ease; but the

church spire still points to higher worlds than he can ever reach to the end of the ages by mechanical skill and human ingenuity and daring. The Church services meet an instinct more fundamental even than that which spurs men on to conquer new material worlds and achieve that which has never been done before.

The inventive faculties, the perfection of human skill, the discontent with present achievement that drives man ever on to new discovery—these things come from Him who lies at the heart of all things, and man is restless, and will ever be restless, until he consecrates all his faculties, all his skill, all his effort, and all his divine discontent to Him Who is Alpha and Omega—the end as well as the beginning of all.

CHAPTER XXI

LOVE AND PAIN

“For life, with all it yields of joy and woe,
And hope and fear, . . .
Is just our chance o’ the prize of learning love,
How love might be, hath been indeed and is.”

R. BROWNING.

I AM a Christian, but I am certainly not a Christian because I believe that I can give a complete logical answer to every difficulty which can be urged against this or that article of the Christian Creed. The Roman Cardinal, of whom I have read somewhere, who is said to boast the possession of such a complete intellectual armoury, would not, I think, win me to belief were I an unbeliever, even though he might dispose of my arguments to his own satisfaction. Were logic and life conterminous, it would be possible, and not only possible but essential, to a reasonable faith to attain to such a position. But logic and life—this surely is now a truism—are not conterminous. Life is always so much bigger than any attempted logical summary of it, that a purely logical faith would be too small to meet life’s needs.

I am a Christian, then, because Christianity fits life, illuminates it and enlarges it, gives it meaning and value. And this meaning and value become more and more evident as the years of this earthly existence pass away, and the soul's needs, deepening with the ever-widening experiences of the realities of life, love and sorrow, joy and disappointment, and the insoluble mysteries of pain and bereavement, find in the message of the Christian faith their only satisfaction.

Christianity fits life, because its appeal lies so much more to the heart than to the head, and, in the last resort, it is in the heart, not in the head, that life's mysteries find their brightest illumination.

“ If e'er, when faith had fall'n asleep
I heard a voice, ‘ Believe no more,’
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep ;

“ A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answer'd, ‘ I have felt.’ ”¹

It is for this reason that the boast of our Cardinal seems so beside the mark, and leaves us so unmoved. Our own so incomplete Christian experience is so much more to us than his complete Christian scheme, even as the limited experience of this world we have gained by our own travels, our own personal adventure, means so infinitely more to us than the Map

¹ Tennyson, “ In Memoriam.”

of the World which hung upon our class-room wall, from which, in spite of its completeness and its accuracy, we gained so inaccurate an idea of the world as it is.

Christianity fits life because it tells us, what our heart tells us, that love is life's only centre and life's only explanation. All other experience divorced from this supreme experience leaves us merely puzzled, unsatisfied, burdened with the ultimate conviction of the Preacher, "*Vanitas vanitatum, omnia vanitas.*" Joy and success, no less than pain and sorrow and bereavement, leave us with a sense of unsatisfied longing unless and until we have found them, not merely illuminated by, but leading to deeper experience of, love. To love, and love alone, "all things work together for good"; and the actual experience of this "working together for good" of all the changes and chances of life leads to that faith founded upon a rock, against which the storms of life beat in vain.

It is for this reason that the weakest argument for the truth of Christianity is always the verbal apologetic, and the one argument really powerful to convince the unbeliever, and confirm the waverer, is the argument of a life triumphant, through faith and love, over the worst the world can do.

It is for this same reason that all the intellectual arguments against the truth of Christianity leave the convinced Christian a Christian still, however hard he may find it to answer them intellectually. The one

blow that really strikes home, the one attack that comes near to success, is that which holds up the lovelessness and faithlessness of professed Christians as the strongest argument against the truth of the Christian religion.

The real truth is that you cannot explain Christ away—the Christ Who says in the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world—whether He be the Christ of history and tradition or the same Christ manifested in the lives of common men and women to-day.

The Christ Who lifted up draws me and all men to Himself, is the Christ I have seen and still see bearing His Cross in every walk in life, as He bears it in the pages of Gospel. I have seen Him over and over again in men and women who, in His strength, have turned to good now some slow wasting disease, now some sudden unlooked-for anguish of body or of soul, now some unceasing daily burden, borne with triumphant courage long year after year, turned them to good, not for themselves only, but for all whose privilege it has been to know them. In the presence of these suffering radiant lives and victorious deaths, of experience, all intellectual doubts have seemed so utterly beside the mark as to be hardly worth consideration, except in so far as all intellectual problems are a healthy challenge to an active mind.

So for me in this fashion the strangest of all life's paradoxes has justified itself. That which once seemed

the blackest darkness has proved itself the very centre of light. That which, considered as an intellectual problem—the problem of pain—seemed an unanswerable argument against faith in a God of Love, considered anew as a fact of experience has proved itself the real occasion of faith's triumphant vindication. Here just where life seemed to be at its worst, it has been found to be at its best. Here where the soul has been most completely bereft of visible succour the power of the invisible world has been most plainly revealed.¹

And it is not merely that in this way a puzzle has been solved. It is not merely that I can now say “my belief is no longer upset by the hardest of all problems, the problem of pain.” The result is more practical than this. A way is revealed for me to walk in, a source of strength is revealed for me to use. The faith of these triumphant souls has not so to speak been given to them ready-made and complete. It has rather been won along a path of obedience and surrender. The power to consecrate the whole of life comes to those who have learnt to consecrate it bit by bit. The faith triumphant in the hour of crisis is, for the most part, the faith which has been steadily nourished in the common course of life. It is true that there are cases of sudden conversion brought

¹ This line of thought has been followed out very carefully in a most striking little book called “The Gospel of Pain,” by the Rev. T. J. Hardy (George Bell and Son).

about by some sudden crisis, but these are the exceptions.

The Catholic Church places in the central place, in her shrines, an Altar—an Altar surmounted by a Cross—and offers her children, as the central act of devotion, a service which is, first and last, a service of sacrifice, that they may learn in the discipline of her ordered life that mental habit of regarding all life as a sacrifice, and all sacrifice, however painful, as a means to larger life, which enables them to find in their darkest hours Him

“Who gave His children Pain for friend,
And Death for surest hope of life.”¹

In this, as in so many other ways, whatever her failures, she remains true to the central idea of the Gospel, true to the Master, to Whose power and love she is called to witness.

To the unbeliever the thought of the whole creation, groaning and travailing together in pain, furnishes the strongest conceivable intellectual argument against the existence of a loving God. The believer, on the other hand, as he first watches at the foot of the Cross and sees there the world’s most tremendous agony made the supreme revelation of Love, and then sees that miracle repeated in countless humble believers as their own hour of supreme temptation becomes the occasion of the triumph of the Spirit; and, once more, in the

¹ Henry Newbolt, “Clifton Chapel.”

experience of his own life finds through faith the power of victory over the world's fiercest assaults, arrives at an unconquerable assurance that he is in the hands of a loving Father, and never more so than when his sufferings and his need are greatest. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith"; and, again, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself."

CHAPTER XXII

AN OPEN-AIR FAITH AND BELIEF IN MIRACLES

WE want a faith strong enough to weather the storms of life. The hot-house faith which is upset by the first blast of criticism, which cannot hold its own in the rough and tumble of the world of men, if it ever was of any real use, is certainly becoming more and more impossible in these times when men pass so rapidly from place to place, and are thrown so much more upon their own resources than in earlier, quieter days. It requires no very acute vision to see that with the arrival of motor cars, and the coming of aeroplanes into even our quietest country villages—the last homes of secluded faith, as well as of exploded superstition—the days of a simple unquestioning acceptance of religious truth upon the authority of others are numbered. Now, more than ever we need a faith founded upon the rock. And, to change the metaphor, such a sure faith can often only arise like the *phœnix*, out of the ashes of a narrower faith. At a Church Congress some few years ago, it was my fate to hear an able and much-applauded speaker denouncing with vehe-

ment invective the higher critics, on the ground that he had known the simple faith of many an undergraduate made shipwreck of by some theological lecturer, who had laughed him out of his old belief in the inerrancy of the Old Testament. Is a faith so easily destroyed a faith worth keeping? Even if it had never had to face the laughter of a don, could it have survived many years of after life in the world? Had it survived, would it not inevitably have become in later life the parent either of bigotry or of indifference?

Of course, those who are strong still have need to bear the infirmities of the weak. They have need to remember the danger of forcing strong meat upon babes. Our teachers need to deal tenderly and patiently with the brother whose little insight makes it hard for him to disentangle the essential and permanent from the transitory and perishing. They need to take into account the still surviving irrational methods of teaching the Bible in our schools. But when all this is said, we only come back to the truth that we need something more than an unquestioning acceptance of authority as the basis of faith. The truth is that it is difficult for all of us, whether we have faith, or are still seeking it, to discriminate between essentials and non-essentials. Those who have a living faith are not necessarily able to give a true account of it to others, and are only too apt to think that they believe that which they have really only accepted along with belief, because they have

been told that such acceptance was essential to a true faith.

Only the other day a fellow-priest remarked to the present writer that he did not believe that many men's religious difficulties were really intellectual, as it was his experience that when once a man had realized his need of religion, he was willing to take the whole Catholic faith without question. No doubt there are countless cases in which that is true. No doubt there are many men whose critical faculties are silenced in a new-found enthusiasm for the faith which does indeed satisfy the hunger of their soul. No doubt such an unquestioning and uncritical faith remains with many devout souls through life. Strong in positive experience they are content to dismiss doubt from their minds, and to put intellectual difficulties quietly on one side. Such men are, indeed, spared much of the doubt and anxiety which men of a more critical temperament have to suffer. Some of us will be tempted at times to look upon them with something approaching envy. But the fact remains that there are many men whose temperament and training will never allow them to arrive at this uncritical assurance in regard to authoritative teaching. And these are the men who, at present, are too often left by authority without the pale. Probably the majority of priests and of the faithful laity are of the class whose uncritical and unanalyzed faith embraces along with all that is essential much that

is unessential, and these men are only too likely to demand of inquirers as essential to faith more than they have any right to demand. And their very success with inquirers of the same temperament as their own will tend to confirm them in the belief that the same presentation of the faith, which has satisfied them and so many others, is really sufficient to meet the difficulties of all who are not blinded to the truth by some moral impediment.

Only every now and then something will happen to startle them, some book will appear, attacking as unessential something which they have thought essential to their own faith, and preached as essential to others, and then comes the temptation to hasty judgment, or the rush to shelter behind the swift denunciations of orthodoxy. Only recently we have witnessed such an episode, occasioned by the revival in a new form of the old controversy about miracles.

The miracles of Jesus have often been denied by those who do not believe in Him, who reject the teaching and dissociate themselves from the fellowship of the Church; but the phenomenon of their rejection by a man who is plainly an earnest believer in the Incarnation, a Catholic in practice, and, moreover, a priest of the Church, and apparently happy to remain so, is, as his critics have hastened to point out, a comparatively, if not entirely, new one. It is, therefore, no matter for surprise that the author

of "Miracles in the New Testament"¹ has been denounced as a heretic, and that this speedy denunciation has brought comfort to many orthodox folk who will never read the book in the condemnation of which they have rejoiced.

But, indeed, the book—whether its conclusions are ultimately to be rejected or not, and upon this question the present writer does not feel competent to express an opinion—has this supreme merit, that it is obviously the honest and patient work of a believer, and as such cannot have been written in vain. And one purpose which it will undoubtedly serve is to help us towards the discovery of what is essential to faith. Miracles, of course, ever since the coming of the age of science, have been regarded as a difficulty in the way of, rather than a support to, belief in the Christian religion; but there were many who had come to regard the question as finally settled in favour of the occurrence of miracles. This, indeed, is the assertion of some of the orthodox critics of Mr. Thompson's book, who are denouncing him as out of date. But to the present writer, it seems that these critics have failed to recognize that at least in some degree the whole position is really new, because the denial of the miracles is based on what is at least, comparatively speaking, a new ground. As recently as fifteen years ago men were loudly denying the possibility of miracles in the name of natural science.

¹ "Miracles in the New Testament," by J. M. Thompson.

At that time all of us who were called upon to make our choice for or against faith were compelled to face the question, "Does science make belief in miracles impossible?" And those of us who emerged from the contest with a victorious faith, answered that science cannot make belief in miracles impossible, since science is only concerned with the investigation and classification of data. It cannot rule out anything on *a priori* grounds. It cannot assert on such grounds that miracles have never happened. Moreover, we were, I think, content to accept the miracles partly for the value of the spiritual teaching they enshrined and still enshrine, and partly because we were taught that the supreme miracle of the Incarnation carried with it the possibility of what we were taught to regard as the lesser miracles, such as the healing of the sick, the feeding of the multitudes, and the turning of water into wine.

Since that day we have seen science growing more humble, learning to realize and to accept its own limitations, of which at one time it appeared to be unaware. Moreover, we have even witnessed the vindication in the name of science of such miracles of healing as those recorded in the Gospel, the possibility of which at one time the scientists were prepared to deny in the same name. Few, if any, men of science will now be prepared arbitrarily to limit the power of mind over matter, far as we still are from complete knowledge or understanding of that power.

But in the new controversy the ground has changed. The question now asked is not "Does Science make belief in miracles impossible?" but rather, "What is the evidence for these particular miracles, and what is that evidence worth?" Those who have raised these questions claim, and surely they are right in claiming, that though science cannot arbitrarily pronounce on the possibility or impossibility of this or that event happening, as soon as it is alleged to have happened, it becomes a datum with which science can and must deal. The question as to whether any alleged miracle actually happened becomes largely, if not wholly, one of evidence.

The nature of that evidence will have to be examined, the credibility of the witnesses tested, and so on.

Now, the writer who has raised the question of the credibility of the Gospel miracles anew within the Church has come, rightly or wrongly, to a negative conclusion. Dividing the miracles into three classes—visions, cures, and wonders—he concludes that the events which come under the first two headings can be explained naturally "on the lines of religious psychology and faith-healing"; and with regard to the third class he says: "We know of no natural laws, and we can conceive of no power consistent with such laws, by which men could walk on water, or multiply bread, or restore the dead to life, in the way which Jesus is stated to have done these things. We have no experience, and we can never hope to have experience,

of water suddenly changing into wine, of trees withering away in a moment, or of iron gates swinging open of their own accord. Either these events are miracles, or they never happened. The upshot of our inquiry is that they never happened."

Now, as I have already said, I do not propose to examine the question raised by this writer in detail, much less to pronounce judgment upon it. But I do desire to urge that this is precisely one of those occasions on which the faithful believer will pray that he may be led by the Holy Spirit to a right judgment, and be most alive to the danger of hasty decision *in either direction*. Certainly no man ought to decide hastily in favour of a new view who has not read and weighed most carefully all that can be urged in favour of adherence to the old.¹ But on this question I would particularly urge the need both of patience and of open-mindedness. For whatever else is true, this surely is true, that whether we believe that the miracles happened as they are alleged to have happened or not, neither we ourselves, nor, we may add, the earlier disciples, were brought to faith in Jesus by the pathway of faith in the miracles. We have rather come to acceptance of the miracles by the pathway of faith in Jesus. But since our faith in Him did not come to us in the first instance through acceptance of the miracles, but rather through the discovery in Him of the satisfaction of our spiritual needs, it is surely

¹ Cf. Gore, "The New Theology and the Old Religion," p. 109.

plain that even if we were compelled by intellectual honesty to surrender our literal belief in the miracles as actual happenings in time, our faith in Him should remain entirely unimpaired. And this is not all. Since we first accepted Jesus as our Lord and Master, much has happened to enrich our experience, and all that has happened has deepened our faith in Him. No intellectual difficulty can now conceivably separate us from Him. Through faith we see Him present at every crisis. When others forsake Him, because all is not made plain and easy for them, we hear Him asking, "Will ye also go away?" and we answer out of the fulness of our experience of His mercy, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

To many of us the greatest stumbling-block to faith remains always the apparent faithlessness of those who, in press and pulpit, claim most loudly to be defenders of the faith, and are most ready to pour their anathemas on the heads of those whose honest convictions lead them to a position which, at first sight, appears unorthodox. "By their fruits ye shall know them." . . . "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance"; "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." In a hundred such passages as these we have canons by which to "try the spirits" of the new teacher and of his critics alike. And, after all, it is the spirit that matters far more than

anything else. False reasoning can and must in time be shown to be false by argument. *Magna est veritas, et prævalebit.* Mere denunciation, on the other hand, especially if it be anonymous, necessarily creates a suspicion that its author is conscious of the weakness of his own position.

Surely to all who desire to crush what appear to be unorthodox opinions by the force of authority the word comes, "Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought. But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."¹

"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." We still apparently need to learn that truth. If we believe in the living Lord and the power of His Spirit to lead us on into all truth, we must surely believe in allowing the completest freedom of thought within the Church. We have no right to say to any believer, "You may think if you like, *provided your thought leads you to our conclusions.*" If we believe that Jesus is the truth, we shall not fear that any honest and patient study of the Gospel will really lead believers away from Him, or make belief in Him more difficult.

So I would plead as my own conclusion of the matter that, on the one hand, those who cannot disentangle their own faith in Jesus from acceptance

¹ Acts v. 38, 39.

of the miracles attributed to Him should, at least, leave the door of the Church open to those to whom the acceptance of the miracles seems unwarranted by a study of the evidence ; and those, on the other hand, who cannot themselves accept miracles, should refrain from the contemptuous condemnation of a simple and less critical faith.

“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”

CHAPTER XXIII

THE PLACE OF AUTHORITY IN RELIGION

THE question of the place, nature, and limits of authority in religion is one of vast importance at the present day. Indeed, it is so large and so important a subject that it would need volumes to discuss it at all adequately. All that I can attempt here is to indicate a few lines of thought which may possibly be of use to the individual who is trying to think out his own relation to the authority claimed by the Church ; how far, if at all, the Church is right in laying claim to any authority over individual souls, and how far he ought to submit himself to that authority. Now, the moment we look out into the world about us, we are aware of the confusion which exists in regard to this question. On the one hand, we see a widespread revolt, in the supposed interests of freedom, against authority of all kinds ; on the other hand, we are met by a claim, by contrast the more impressive, to a submission blind and unconditional to the decrees of a purely external authority. On the one side, every man does that which is right

in his own eyes ; on the other, weary of unsettlement, despairing of peace on any other terms, some men and more women submit themselves, and doubtless find, at least, a temporary peace in so submitting to an authority which at least has the courage to claim and certainly attempts to exact a complete and entire submission to its decrees.

And we of the English Church are met, on the one hand, by the taunt that we exalt the claims of authority without agreeing where authority resides ; and on the other, by the charge that our unhappy divisions are simply the result of our refusal to submit to the claims of the only true authority.

Here, then, is need for a man to inquire as to his own position, even though, in the face of the largeness and obvious difficulty of the whole problem, he can hardly hope to find an easy solution of the many questions which such an inquiry must needs provoke. For my own part, I find myself beginning with the initial conviction of the necessity of some religious authority external to myself, chiefly on the ground that I am a social being, and true social life is an impossibility without some authority. The attempt to cut the bonds which link the individual, on the one hand, to the historic past of which he is in a sense the product, and on the other, to the living society of which he finds himself a member, seems to me frankly absurd. No one but a convinced anarchist—and convinced anarchists are happily few—can logically

repudiate authority in religion. My assent to authority springs from the conviction that true freedom can only be so attained. While I am simply a law unto myself I must be brought continually into conflict with my fellows. The moment we agree to submit to a wise and reasonable authority, we are on the road to peace, because a wise and reasonable authority necessarily has as its aim the welfare of the whole body, and, to this end, the defence of the just rights of every individual member of that society. From which it follows that a wise authority will only attempt to interfere with the individual in so far as he is opposing his own private interests to the larger interests of the body, and by so doing is himself—since his own interest is necessarily bound up with the welfare of the society to which he belongs—in a position of peril.

Now, in religion the ultimate fount of authority is, of course, none other than God Himself—the God who is incarnate in Christ, and still incarnate by His Spirit in the Church. Jesus Himself is said to have spoken with an authority which was instinctively recognized by all men of good-will. The only people who questioned His authority were the self-satisfied, contemptuous, worldly, and those who clung to office and privilege for their own sake. All humble, sincere, faithful people recognized the authority of His teaching and heard Him gladly. And He, on His part, never in any single recorded instance attempted to

compel an external submission or unwilling assent to His own authority. The method He employed was always the method of attraction, never that of compulsion. He ruled by love, not by fear. He never attempted to override men's consciences or suppress their freedom. When His disciples in their zeal desired to call down fire upon those who rejected Him, they drew upon themselves the stern rebuke, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of";¹ when they took it upon themselves to forbid what seemed to them an unauthorized use of His Name, and a breach of the true fellowship, He refused to accept their excessive zeal on His behalf.²

Now, the consideration of these instances is really profoundly important for this reason—that they reveal at once the temper and method of the true authority, and the tendency of zealous disciples to lose that temper and abandon that method. Plainly the authority of Christ and the method He employed must be the same throughout all time, for He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever"; and we have in the historic Christ the norm and standard by which we may discern the spirits of those who claim authority in His Name in the present day, and recognize the presence or absence of His Spirit in theirs.

We shall return to this presently, but it will be convenient first to consider how the living Christ exercised His authority in the early Church after

¹ St. Luke ix. 55.

² *Ibid.*, ix. 49.

Pentecost. We see this plainly enough in the Acts and Epistles. The most important passage in the former, from our point of view is, that which deals with the so-called Council of Jerusalem.¹ Here we see plainly the claim to exercise authority in the Church in matters of discipline and morals, and to issue decisions as to what is and what is not permissible, based upon the recognized presence of Christ and the guidance of His Spirit. All this is evident from the opening sentence of the decree: "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." The method of arriving at that decree was by free and open discussion. The deciding factor was apparently the witness of experience to the working of the Spirit. There was no attempt to prejudge the questions at issue by a rigid adherence to tradition.

The Epistles of St. Paul throw a certain amount of further light upon the question of authority. On the one hand, they reveal the constant appeal of perplexed believers to recognized authority; on the other, they show us the Apostle himself claiming authority in the Churches he has founded in virtue of his Apostleship to the nations, which he has had given to him by direct revelation on the part of Christ and which he exercises with the free consent of the other Apostles.² This authority he exercises most directly in the moral sphere, and in the matter of Church order, and

¹ *Acts xv. 1 et seq.*

² *Cf.* especially *Gal. i. 1, ii. 7-10*; *1 Cor. ix. 1-2.*

always by way of appeal to conscience and reason, except in one case where he permits himself to dismiss a comparatively unimportant question by a final appeal to the custom of the Churches of God.¹

But it is noticeable that even St. Paul, full of passionate zeal as he was, and for this reason peculiarly liable to succumb to the temptations which beset the zealous, makes no attempt to enforce unwilling submission to his authority. His aim is always "by manifestation of the truth" to "commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God."²

When we pass from the New Testament to the Church of the first centuries, we find the same universal recognition of the need of authoritative guidance on the part of perplexed believers, in the face of the problems which arose as the Church spread abroad and was called to meet the claims of other religions and other philosophies in the open field of the world. This appeal to authority is always an appeal of the average believer to the judgment of those who are in some sense entitled to be called experts. It is really of precisely the same nature as the appeal to authority in other walks in life. And from the first it was recognized that the authority in the Church resided in the body as a whole, not in any separate portion of it. The appeal to the judgments of individual Bishops or Councils, was an appeal to them to declare what the whole body had always believed, and to

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 16.

² 2 Cor. iv. 2.

judge whether this or that teaching or practice was in harmony with this universal faith. Moreover, it has often been pointed out that the validity of their authoritative decrees, already limited in the direction indicated, was further held to be dependent on their acceptance after promulgation by the whole body of the faithful. In a word, present authority was always limited by the appeal to the unchanging mind of the incarnate Christ, and was always for that very reason, committed to His method, which is, as we have seen, the method of appeal to men's hearts and consciences.

But the study of the exercise of authority in history reveals not only the true continuity between the Christ of the Gospels and the Christ of the Church, it reveals also the ever-present danger which besets those who find themselves at any time in a position of authority. It is the danger of allowing themselves in their very zeal for Christ to forget the manner of spirit they are of and to abandon His methods for the easier and simpler methods of intolerance. Intolerance is, indeed, the besetting temptation of men in authority in all ages, and intolerance always springs from the same cause—want of faith in the living God and the inherent power of the truth to triumph over falsehood. It was want of faith which led Caiaphas to enunciate his historic utterance: “It is expedient that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not”—a cry which is the justification of the suppression of the prophet in every age.

It was want of faith which led the zealous disciples to believe that the cause of the living God needed to be supported by the invocation of fire from heaven upon unbelievers, and the suppression by force of an unauthorized use of the Master's name. It is want of faith which has led to the persecution and denunciation of individuals and the attempt to suppress by these methods individual expression of opinion—in the supposed interests of the cause of truth—in every age. And the disaster which always follows upon the manifestation of this spirit by authority is the reaction of the common people against an authority which, judged by the standard enshrined in the Christ of the Gospels, must needs seem usurped, a reaction which leads to the rejection of all authority as in itself an evil thing.

But such a rejection of authority is itself as disastrous as the evil against which it is a reaction. For it involves the attempt, always doomed to failure, to start life as it were, *de novo*. In reality we cannot afford to dispense with the funded experience of believers and the divinely inspired lessons of the past. The thoroughgoing modernity of the anarchical innovator is in truth as faithless as the reliance upon inherited privilege of the mere traditionalist. It is the denial of the presence of God in the past by the one, as the other in reality denies it in his own day.

So while we must needs protest against the claim to unconditional submission made by an authority

which, by its very intolerance, proclaims its own deviation from the truth, we must protest no less against the attempt to dispense with authority altogether.

The true path of progress for the individual seems to lie in a glad acceptance, as the basis of his own personal adventure, of that which has proved its validity by the test of universal acceptance in all ages of the Church. Such acceptance properly understood involves the claim to absolute freedom in matters of conscience, to complete liberty of thought and to open criticism of the decrees of authority, and the temper manifested in those decrees, which, as we have seen, have always been held to need the acceptance of the faithful to give them complete validity. No individual can reasonably claim more than this, and no wise authority will refuse to grant as much.

One more consideration is worth urging for the sake of those who are tempted in hours of impatience to feel that authority is bound hand and foot by the fetters of mere tradition. It ought to be remembered that it is of the very essence of authority to be conservative. It must of necessity take up a position which to the herald of new truth, no less than to the mere innovator, must, equally of necessity, appear behind the times. It is indeed the function of authority to be a little behind the times, and so to preserve that continuity between the past and the present which is the only guarantee of a true progress.

And we of the Church of England, much as we may desire such measures of Church Reform as may make authoritative utterance easier, rightly as we may repudiate the suggestion sometimes made that the ultimate authority in religious and ecclesiastical matters rests with the Parliament of the nation rather than with that greater body the Church, have no need to give way to the impatience which is born of disbelief. After all, we stand for freedom more absolute than is possible on either side of us, for an ideal more true, and for that very reason more difficult of attainment, than the alternative ideals which are presented on one side or the other. It is this feeling which leads me to plead that in this matter our clearest duty at the present time is that of extreme patience.

Our unhappy divisions are themselves due, as we cannot but believe, to the failure of authority to keep true to the Divine standard of the Gospels. We shall not recover our lost unity until we have recovered, or discovered, the true spirit of unity. The short cut of irrational submission to claims which true authority could never urge, in the interest of a uniformity which is a thing wholly different from true unity, cannot lead to anything but disaster. Faith in the living God and patient waiting for Christ will themselves bring in time the reward for which we long and must needs pray. Meanwhile if our ultimate authority seems hard to seek, we have, in the authorized Formularies of the Church to which we belong, the directions and

counsel of the historic episcopate, and the voice of conscience within, a threefold cord not easily broken, which will help us to make the practical decisions demanded of us. That more is left to private judgment than is the case elsewhere, that there is an element of uncertainty for us, which others escape, need not trouble those who have come to a personal faith in the guidance of the living Christ. After all, it is by personal choice rather than anything else that personal character is formed, and the formation of a Christ-like character is the end of all personal religion.

NOTE.—When this chapter was written, I had not read the interesting and suggestive chapters on authority in Dr. Inge's "Faith and its Psychology" (Duckworth and Co.). Dr. Inge calls authority "a secondary ground of faith," and criticizes the "two great historic attempts to make faith rest on external authority," finding that "the claims of the infallible Church and of the infallible Book" are "both defective," though "each contains a true principle," and that "the authority of Jesus Christ, for the well-instructed Christian, is not external, but is a voice which speaks within us as well as to us."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE TRUE TEMPER OF CATHOLICISM

I BEGAN this book by saying that what led me to the acceptance of the religion of the Incarnation was the sense that life without religion was futile and vain, and that no religion could ultimately be satisfying which was not wide enough to embrace and turn to account life as a whole. It is not necessary that a man should consciously be governed by a religious motive at every moment of his daily life; but it is necessary, if his religion is to be vital, not only that there should be no contrast between his religion and his daily work and interests, but that, since they are alike part of or aspects of one life, his religion, which is life at its highest, should at once gather up and permeate all the rest of life. A religion which is a mere uncorrelated appendix to life is a religion only in name.

Now I hope I have shown how in my view at least—and I have not pretended to speak for anyone else—the sacramental or the Catholic presentation of Christianity does, at least in ideal, cover the whole of life—

the whole of life for the individual, and the whole life of the world. The Catholic Church is built upon the faith which sees Jesus Christ as God manifest in the flesh. The doctrine of the Incarnation is bound up with the doctrine of the Sacraments—both alike involve a conception of matter as intended to be, and capable of becoming, the vehicle of the Spirit. Both alike involve a conception of events in time as intended to be, and capable of becoming, occasions of revelation from the sphere of the eternal. Both alike are based upon the fundamental principle that the whole of life is in essence religious, that religion is intended to be all-embracing. The same principle underlies, and is the justification of, Catholic ceremonial, and the dedication of the arts to the purposes of religion which is so characteristic of Catholicism.

On the other hand, at the root of all anti-sacramentalism and anti-ritualism lies a conception of matter as evil, and incapable of redemption, and as in some way essentially opposed to the Spirit. This is a conception to which the teaching of modern science, as I understand it, is as much opposed as the ancient teaching of the Catholic Church.

But if the Catholic theory is the true theory, why has Catholicism so largely failed? Why has it failed, not only to draw all men unto itself, but even to hold its own children? Why is it that so many men of goodwill—who care for righteousness above all else, who are real seekers after truth—are repelled rather

than attracted by the Church which claims to be for all? Why is it, above all, that we see at the present time a remarkable renewal of interest in and inquiry with regard to religion, and the abandonment in all really thoughtful circles of materialism—and *still* the Church failing to answer the needs which men are realizing anew?

These are questions we are compelled to ask, though a satisfactory answer may be hard to find. There are, of course, many who will answer glibly that the Church only fails because men are unwilling to accept the truth which she offers them. It is their pride, their stubbornness, their invincible ignorance, which make them deaf to her appeals.

It is an easy answer, but will it satisfy any open-minded man? Are pride and stubbornness and invincible ignorance really one wit more characteristic of the world outside the Church than of professing and practising Churchpeople? No doubt there are many bigoted opponents of Catholicism whose bigotry blinds them to the truth; but are there no bigoted upholders of Catholicism, and is not bigotry blinding wherever it is found? And is it not true that there is an immense gulf between the ideal of the Church and the actual conduct of what one must call, for want of a better name, the official Church?

To me it seems, and I think in this that I speak for large numbers of average men, that Catholicism has failed, and still fails, to win men of goodwill, only

because its professors so often tend to become uncatholic. *Corruptio optimi pessima.* Extremes meet, and Catholicism fails too often just because too often it tends to become less truly Catholic than the Protestantism it is so anxious to repudiate.

The theory of Catholicism, the true ground of its appeal, and of all its historic greatness, is that it is universal, that it embraces all truth, for all men, of all times, and of all places.

The religion of Christ, the religion of St. John and St. Paul and all the Saints, the religion of the Church, is the summary of all truth in heaven and in earth. The supreme work of Christ is, as St. Paul saw, the work of breaking down dividing walls.¹ Christ was and is the light which lighteneth *every* man that cometh into the world. And therefore the Church is always right so long as it is inclusive, so long as it welcomes with open arms all new truth, and all men of goodwill. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me," is one of the words of Christ which cannot pass away.

But the very theory of its inclusiveness may be so stated as to make it exclusive, and it is when it becomes exclusive that it is wrong. It is then, when the salt has lost its savour, that men are repelled and not won. Now plainly there are two ways—two opposite ways—of interpreting the formula of Catholicism quoted above, a formula which would be accepted by all who rejoice in the name of Catholic.

¹ Cf. Eph. ii. 14.

Catholicism embraces all truth for all men ; therefore the Church welcomes all truth however it may come, as of the God Who has promised by His Spirit to lead us into all truth. It is hers to bestow her blessing upon every honest searcher after truth in all the many fields of human activity. She fears no possible new discovery in the fields of science, of criticism, of philosophy, or of political economy, since she is sure that in all these fields the truth must prevail, though it will prevail, as she knows so well, only through conflict and persecution and crucifixion. For herself, her own history, her own documents, even her own mysteries—since they are the open mysteries of Christ, not the hidden mysteries of the superstitious heathen—are open to the most critical and searching investigation. Because she believes them to have Divine sanction, she is sure that nothing can possibly rob her of the truth and power which they enshrine. Her invincible faith in a living God, Who does indeed rule over all the world, renders her absolutely fearless. That is one way, surely the true way, of stating the Catholic position. But there is another way of interpreting the self-same formula, a way which seems commoner, alas ! among those who claim most loudly to be Catholic. The Church embraces all truth ; therefore there is no new truth to be discovered, except in submission to her authority. Therefore all modern notions are to be regarded with profound suspicion. Therefore, Catholics must draw

together, and denounce those that are without. "This multitude that knoweth not the law is accursed!" If men cannot accept the orthodox statement of the Christian religion it is because of their pride and invincible ignorance. Everything that conflicts with tradition is of the evil one, and is doomed to destruction. Everyone who casteth out devils in Christ's Name is to be forbidden if he followeth not the orthodox disciples. If he is successful and gains a following, that is no wonder in so evil a world. No doubt "he casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils."

Is there any convinced Catholic who does not know the ever-present danger of slipping into that spirit, which in its extreme form passes into the utter denial of Christ and refusal of His Spirit, so evident when it is stated as baldly as I have stated it in the preceding paragraph? One has only to read the correspondence columns of the Catholic newspapers, and the reviews of unorthodox books in the same papers, to see how deeply rooted this tendency is. And what makes it the more easy is that the cry for tolerance is so often the cry of the indifferent. To a Gallio who cares for none of these things tolerance is, of course, supremely easy, and for this very reason, for the Gallios of the secular press to sneer at bigotry is only to add fuel to the flames. The bigot is so far right that he is, at least, in the thick of the battle, and it is better to be there even on the wrong side, than to

occupy Meroz, watching in careless and cowardly indifference from the hillside those who are at grips upon the plain below. "I would that thou wert cold or hot, so then because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot I will spew thee out of my mouth."¹ When all is said and done, it is the Laodicean attitude that is most certainly wrong. The tolerance that springs from indifference or mere sentimentality is certainly worse than the intolerance which springs from warmth of conviction. But there is a true tolerance compatible with the utmost zeal, nay, born of that zeal for the living Christ coming ever anew into the world, the tolerance of the old making way for the new for which it has itself prepared the way, standing and crying, "He must increase, but I must decrease." What we really need is surely a constant return to first principles that we may test by them the theory we ourselves profess. We need to remember the universal dangers which have beset religious people in all ages. We need constant watchfulness as well as constant prayer, lest we ourselves fall victims to these old temptations. The one tremendous universal danger is surely the danger of standing still, of saying, "Thus far I will go, and no farther," of regarding the salvation which was only a beginning as the accomplished end. We started with our need of a living God, our need of a religion wide enough to cover the whole of life. We

¹ Rev. iii. 15.

must then refuse to be content with a religion that has ceased to answer to this need. For since life is never stationary, it follows that the religion which fits life cannot be stationary either. Religion must be progressive, or it must be outgrown. Vital experience comes to us at one moment in one way, and at another moment in a new way. We must be ready to be led. We are to take up our cross and follow Christ, and Christ is ever leading us to new and wider experiences as we can bear it. The true attitude of mind of the Catholic is one of faithful expectancy, not of timid fear. Is this the characteristic attitude of the Catholic to-day? Is it not true that many of our leaders are apparently content to huddle together behind ruinous walls, shrieking that they alone are guarding the deposit of the faith, when, as a matter of fact, they are in the far rear of the battle which has swept on and left them behind?

There is an aspect of Catholicism which may be rightly described as guarding a deposit entrusted to us. But that which we have to guard is alive, not dead. The faith which we have to guard is faith in a living God. We are to guard the belief in a living Creator Who worketh hitherto and did not leave off working at any moment in the past, and has never restricted the field of His labour to one spot on the face of the earth, or one body of men. Who, if He sent his Son into the world in one Man in one place at one moment of time, yet by the same Son lightenth

all men everywhere, and so prepares the whole world everywhere to see and welcome Him in His supreme revelation. We are to guard the belief in a living Redeemer, Who works now as He has always worked, and is welcomed now as He has ever been welcomed, by all men of honest and good heart whenever they see Him ; Who is crucified now as He has ever been crucified since the foundation of the world by all men who are not true to their own best selves, whose eyes are blinded by pride and worldliness and arrogance and contempt and bitterness and uncharitableness. We are to guard the belief in a living Spirit, Who inspires men of goodwill everywhere, and is the secret source of all new truth wherever it is found ; Who is ever revealed sacramentally whether to those who have found Him in the Sacraments of the Church, or to those who in other ways have come to see that all the outward show of the world is capable of a sacramental interpretation ; Who is leading us on here and now into all truth ; Who keeps those who are awake and aware alive to the progress of the world, and saves them from the only death that matters, the death of stagnation, of loss of faith, of denial of the living God.

We Catholics fail, not because we are not right in claiming a glorious and precious heritage from the past, but because we rest upon that heritage even while we misinterpret it. We are right in holding that there can be no absolutely new religion ; right in insisting upon the worth of our historic links with

past ages, right in searching the ancient Scriptures, for these are they which testify of the living Christ; we are wrong only when, and only in so far as we hold to tradition in a wrong way, exalting the unimportant things at the expense of the important ones, idealizing the past at the expense of the present, refusing to see God unless He chooses to come to us in exactly the ways in which our misinterpretation of the past leads us to expect Him. Are we not in danger of forgetting what the Bible teaches us so plainly that orthodoxy of profession is no guarantee that we shall recognize the living God when He comes? We, Protestants and Catholics alike, forget that the study of the past, absolutely right and necessary as it is, carries with it always one inherent danger—the danger of idealizing some special moment, and seeking simply to reproduce that over again in the present.

And, too often, our idealization of the past appears to lead us to faithlessness in the present.

He smote the stony rock indeed, in the past, so that the water gushed out, and the streams flowed withal, but can He give bread also, in the present, and provide flesh for His people?¹ The Jews were all ready to acknowledge that God had dealt with them wondrously in the past, and ever ready to proclaim that He would deal with them wondrously in the future—but when He came they denied and refused Him because He did not fit in with the scheme they had framed for Him in their minds.

¹ Ps. lxxviii. 21.

Their danger is precisely ours. We believe the Christ was manifested in the Judæa of old. We are sure that He was manifested in the early days of the Church ; we are even ready to acknowledge, now, that He was working in the Evangelical Movement, or in the Oxford Movement; we believe that in our own individual lives He has come and called us, and we have acknowledged Him; we believe that He will come in the future near or far off, but are we not too often blind to His working in the present ? Are we not so busy making quite clear the exact and the only way in which He can come, and denouncing those who differ from us, that we fail to see Him standing in our midst. " Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth ? "

Christ came of old to a world grown a-weary of its old faiths, a world dissatisfied and expectant, a world full of religious experiments and revivals, a world which yet enshrined in its midst one historic Church supreme in the grandeur of its heritage and its ideal over all other religions new or old. He came to a world from which He had never been absent, a world wholly prepared by the universal overruling providence of God for the moment of His coming. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. And this has been the story of His coming in all ages. It is the story of His coming now. It is the essential truth

of the past. It is the essential truth of the present. For that is true in the present, that alone is true in the present, which enshrines the essential truth, the living spirit of the past. Christ is here, of the Church and within the Church which He founded, which He has inspired in all ages to prepare the world for Him. He is here, and sooner or later all men of faith and hope and love, whether within or without the formal borders of the Church, will receive Him, and receive of Him the power to become the sons of God, though many who receive Him know it not now, and will one day ask wonderingly, "Lord, when saw we Thee?" and many who are now crying enthusiastically, "Lord, Lord," and are in His Name working wonderful works and casting out devils, are still without the kingdom of Heaven. Christ is here, and we may find Him if we seek Him; and when we find Him we must let Him lead us on. For to find Him is not enough. Judas found Him, and Judas lost Him. Peter found Him, believed in Him, denied Him, lost Him, and found Him again in a new and unexpected way.

And that is the history alike of the Church and of the individual soul. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "They will go from strength to strength, and unto the God of Gods appeareth every one of them in Zion."

CHAPTER XXV

THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER

THE faith which I hold, the faith which, in rough outline, I have tried to set forth in this little book, may, I hope, be described as "The Catholic Faith," or, at least, such portions of it as have been apprehended by a mere average man. I hope also that it may be called a progressive Catholicism. I cannot disguise from myself that there are many Catholics who do not believe in progress. To my mind faith in the living Christ and the Holy Spirit, Who is His Spirit leading us into all truth, carries with it faith in progress. But though I believe in progress, I cannot accept everything which is preached in the name of progress. I do not think that every fashion of to-day is necessarily an improvement upon the fashions of yesterday. On the contrary, while I believe in the progress of the whole under the overruling providence of the God, Who does really govern the world, I believe that, side by side with, or rather within, the general progress, there takes place an opposite movement which may

be rightly called Degeneration. It is this fact which gives us always an alternative, and demands active and continuous efforts of the will. By the deliberate choices we make, we identify ourselves with the upward or the downward movement. It is faith which tells us in which direction true progress lies. By faith we look back over the past and trace the eternal presence and unchanging method of the Spirit of God in the midst of the world. Science and religion both reveal the working of the same Spirit. The supreme worth of the Scriptures, and especially of the recorded life of Jesus and the account of what we may, perhaps, call the reaction of that life upon the world, consists for me in this—that it gives me a standard by which to judge all life and all movements. There I seem to see the whole cosmic movement focused in a point in time. Faith shows me God present in Jesus. Faith shows me Him as the fulfilment of all the past, and the promise of all the future. Faith shows me a Church, a nation, and a mixed multitude of individual men, all judging themselves by their attitude towards, and their judgment of God—the God Who is Love, Who is Light, Who is Truth—present in their midst, offering Himself to faith, discerned by faith, and denied, rejected, and crucified by faithlessness. That record shows me that the humble, those who hungered and thirsted after righteousness, those who were single-minded in their desire to know God, those who were

discontented with themselves, those who were willing to make ventures for the truth's sake—above all, those who were capable of personal love and devotion—were attracted to Jesus, and grew in faith, through contact with the Divine life, until they were willing to give themselves wholly to Him, to live for Him, to face intolerance, persecution, and even death for His sake, because they were sure that they had found God in Him.

The same record shows me, on the other hand, that all who clung to mere tradition, privilege, and position—all of them God-given, but God-given to prepare them, and to help them to prepare others, to recognize and welcome Him in their midst—rejected the living God when He offered Himself to them in Christ. “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” Faith shows me that this opportunity and this tragedy are age-long. They are going on here and now. The God Who offers Himself to us, offers Himself in man, as He offered Himself of old. He comes, as He came then, not to destroy but to fulfil the old. Men await His coming as they awaited it of old ; and still, as of old, they crucify Him when He comes. But those who are humble, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness—in a word, all men of goodwill, of large hearts, and open minds—see and welcome Him, Who is ever old and ever new, Who is ever coming, and when He comes is never limited by the traditional limits which

we set upon the manner of His coming, but is still recognized as of old by faith and faith alone.

This faith you cannot teach others as in a formal catechism. But those who see can, in varying measure, say how they see, they can—nay, they must—try to help others to see.

This is the faith and this the motive which lie behind this little book of mine. I know that there are many who have already passed far beyond the stage of faith at which I have arrived. There are many who see with infinitely clearer eyes than mine, and have seen what I have not seen. Such, I hope, will criticize my book and show me where I am wrong. There may be others who will read this book—this is my great hope—who are still seeking faith, and may be helped by it to find what they seek. There are many in this restless, questioning age to whom faith does not come easily. Perhaps in some cases the reason is that they expect too much. Perhaps they are asking for a perfect chart of the great river of life, and have yet to learn that there is no such chart in existence. Perhaps they are asking “to see life steadily and see it whole.” I would humbly submit that they are asking an impossibility. In moments of inspiration men do perhaps get their fleeting vision of the whole, but that vision, so sudden and so splendid, passes as it came, and those who have seen it see only—the more steadily, perhaps, for having seen the glory that lies

beyond—the difficulties and dangers of their present environment. There is no perfect chart of the river of life, but other voyagers who have passed without shipwreck through that reach of the river in which you find yourself may be able to tell you of some of the rocks they have seen and avoided, some of the rapids they have safely passed through. To drop all figure of speech, what most men in religious difficulty want, the only thing that will really help them, is not a series of intellectual answers to intellectual problems, but a communication of living faith, which can come only from human fellowship. The faithful man lives, and is a centre of life to others who are not too shy or too proud to stretch out hands of longing to him. And the man who feels that he is in need and is seeking faith has, in fact, the faith of which he is not yet aware. Brought into contact with the faithful, and so touching, with the desire for living help, the hem of Christ's garment, he will hear sooner or later the words: "Thy faith hath saved thee."

It is this truth which has led to the foundation of such houses of inquiry, and centres of spiritual life, as the Pusey House at Oxford, and Liddon House and St. Edward's House¹ in London, where men of educa-

¹ Liddon House is 15, Thurloe Square, three minutes' walk from the South Kensington Tube and Underground Station. St. Edward's House, the London House of the Cowley Fathers, is 22, Great College Street, Westminster.

tion who are genuine and earnest inquirers are always welcome. Such houses are tiny gateways—not as yet nearly numerous enough—through which men may pass, if they are men of goodwill, and to such alone was the Gospel peace promised, into the fellowship and fulness of life of the Church.

So I would suggest that the religious inquirer must realize the necessity of being practical. For this very reason he must realize that, since religion is a life and not a mere system of thought, he can never attain to a real religion merely by the study of books, or even from spoken words, though from one and the other he may get help and guidance.

And then he must face this further fact that he will never get at the inner truth of the Christian religion except by perseverance in Christian practice. "In your patience ye shall win your souls." The doctrines of the Creed must ever remain incredible, or unreal apart from the life which interprets them. The doctrine of the Trinity is translated by a life of love, self-sacrifice, worship. The doctrine of the Incarnation becomes real and vital only to the man in whose soul Christ is re-born. The doctrine of the Atonement, capable of seeming an insoluble puzzle while it is regarded simply as an intellectual problem, becomes vital in the life of the actual penitent, to whom atonement with God is a matter of living experience. The Creed and life go hand in hand, difficulty and disappointment follow inevitably when

they are sundered. Only those who seek the Creed in life will find life illuminated by the Creed.

Finally, the Church continues to exist, and continues to be a centre of life down the ages, because she bears witness to this fact, that there is no life save through the Cross. To the inquirer who seeks mere escape from Cross-bearing she has no message but one of sternest warning; to him who comes to her, faint and weary beneath the burden of a Cross, whether intellectual or moral, she has no words but words of welcome and good cheer. "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

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